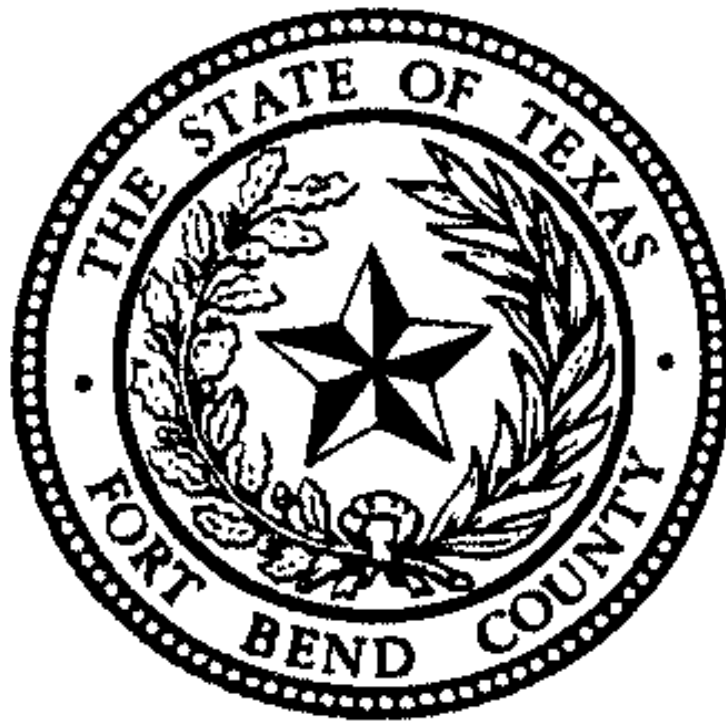


Fort Bend County Community Plan



2012-2013

Fort Bend County Community Plan

What Is a Community Plan?

This plan is formally known as the Fort Bend County Criminal Justice Community Plan, the purpose of which is to identify gaps in services regarding criminal justice issues. The Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office (CJD) requires that Criminal Justice Community Plans be developed and maintained by counties and regions throughout Texas.

The document that is represented here reflects the efforts of many in Fort Bend County that are concerned with assuring that any gaps in services are closed, thus making our communities safer places in which to live and work. It is with grateful acknowledgement that the names of those involved in the process of developing this plan are listed in Part II (Community Planning Group).

Though the final draft of this plan was completed in December of 2012, this is a work in progress. New criminal justice goals are identified, the Planning Group changes as a result of individual and agency circumstances, and requirements concerning the makeup of the Plan are subject to change from year to year. Thus, Fort Bend County is interested in keeping up with these changes, and including them in updates that will be posted from time to time.

If you are reading this Plan and have not been involved in its development, you are invited to join in this ongoing effort. Any questions you may have can be addressed to either Mary Gready, Community Plan Coordinator for Fort Bend County, or to a Criminal Justice Program staff member of the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC). Contact information is provided within this document.

The Fort Bend County Commissioners Court supports the concept of community planning by providing staff support and resources for development and implementation of the Fort Bend County Community Plan. Additionally, the Commissioners Court supports grant applications from county departments as well as community organizations that address gaps in services identified in this Community Plan.

Areas Represented

Incorporated Communities:

Arcola	Beasley	Fresno	Fulshear
Houston	Katy	Kendleton	Meadows Place
Missouri City	Needville	Orchard	Pleak
Richmond	Rosenberg	Simonton	Stafford
Sugar Land	Thompsons	Weston Lakes	

Unincorporated Communities:

Longpoint	New Territory	Pecan Grove	Crabb
Fairchilds	Guy	Mission Bend	Fresno
Town West			

School Districts:

Fort Bend Independent School District	Lamar Consolidated ISD
Katy Independent School District	Needville Independent School District
Stafford Municipal School District	Kendleton Independent School District

Brief description and history of Fort Bend County:

Fort Bend County is a direct bordering county of Harris County, located on the southwest side of Houston. The county has a **2010** Census population of **585,375** and a land area of 875 square miles. Fort Bend County leads the Houston region, as well as much of the state and nation, in demographic excellence. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, Fort Bend County grew **65%** over the past ten years to 585,375. The Fort Bend County 2020 projection is 679,433.

US 59 traverses the center of the county from northeast to southwest, while US90A crosses from east to west. State highways (SH) 6 and 36 provide important north-south routes. Neighboring counties are Austin, Brazoria, Harris, Waller and Wharton.

Law enforcement agencies include the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office, four (4) precinct Constables' offices, ten (10) municipal police departments, Department of Public Safety investigators and troopers, and officers of the Texas Rangers, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Besides Houston, the municipalities with police departments are Arcola, Katy, Meadows Place, Missouri City, Needville, Richmond, Rosenberg, Stafford and Sugar Land.

There are six (6) District Courts, four (4) County Courts-At-Law, three (3) Associate District Courts, one (1) Associate County Court-at-Law, five (5) Justice of the Peace Courts, nineteen (19) Municipal Courts . A single District Attorney's Office serves the courts. In addition, the system includes an adult probation department, a juvenile probation department and juvenile detention facility, and a county jail.

History:

Fort Bend County holds a prominent place in Texas history. In the early 1820's, the Anglo-American colonization of Texas under grants from the Spanish government was initiated. The arrival of Stephen F. Austin's original colony of 300 families at the bend of the Brazos River was delayed until 1922 by the death of Moses Austin and the independence of Mexico. Ninety miles inland from the coast the settlers built a two-room cabin that was known both as Fort Settlement and Fort Bend. Fifty-three of the land grants to the early settlers were in Fort Bend.

In 1837, the Congress of the Republic of Texas incorporated Richmond and eighteen other towns. Later in the same year, the County of Fort Bend was created from portions of Austin, Harris and Brazoria County. Notable citizens of the county included Jane Long, Mirabeau B. Lamar, and Samuel May Williams.

Richmond became a prosperous trade center for the surrounding agricultural region. Cotton and sugar and other products were sent down the Brazos River to the Port of Galveston. The early sugar cane plantations and farms supplied the Imperial Sugar industrial complex and its company town evolved into the current City of Sugar

Land. When the railroad from Galveston through Richmond was built in the 1850's, the county became a ready provider of agricultural products and raw materials to coastal markets and beyond. Much of the early prosperity based on the plantation system ended with the Civil War.

Additional railroads further opened the county to new settlers, many from central Europe. Small productive family farms formed the central focus of the economic and social life from the 1880's through World War II. Ranching and cotton production then began to replace the small farms. Missouri City, Stafford, and Rosenberg developed along the rail lines.

Discovery of oil and gas at Blueridge in the early 1920's, followed by discoveries at Orchard and Thompsons, and then later at Katy, signaled the beginning of Fort Bend's petroleum industry.

Beginning in the early 1970's with Houston's expansions, Fort Bend saw new growth in the form of increased residential development. The master-planned communities of Quail Valley, First Colony and Pecan Grove were followed by Greatwood, New Territory and Cinco Ranch. More recently, Sienna Plantation, River Park and Texana has joined the ranks.

Fort Bend has a long and richly varied history and an exceedingly bright future as it continued to build on the foundations established by the original settlers of Texas.

Community Planning Team

Community Plan Coordinator for Fort Bend County: Mary Gready, Supervisor of Special Programs, Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department.

In developing this Community Plan, members of the team were divided into several focus groups for the purpose of narrowing the scope of research and data that are incorporated into the Plan. Some members may serve in multiple capacities/categories.

Juvenile Services:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Kaye Reynolds	Deputy Director, Fort Bend County Health & Human Services
Rhett Gray	Lamar Consolidated ISD
Chance Bagley	Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Dept.
Antoine Holly	Director, Education Partner
Ernie Rodriguez	Director, Fort Bend ISD
Lucia Street	Fort Bend County ACHIEVE
Ruby L. Shaw	Judge, Fort Bend County Truancy Court
Shannon Bloesch	Parks Youth Ranch

Victim Services:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Brenda Bowman	Executive Director, Literacy Council of Fort Bend
Alison Parker	Fort Bend County Women's Center
Azhra Jivani Fenelon	Assistant District Attorney, Fort Bend DA's Office
Susan Gray	Fort Bend County CSCD
Metoyer Martin	Child Advocates of Fort Bend County
Anna Gonzales	Fort Bend County Social Services
Terri Leach	Asst. Victim Assistance Coord., DA's Office
Marjorie Hancock	Asst. County Attorney, County Attorney's Office

Law Enforcement:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Dennis McAfee	Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office
Danny Jan	Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office
Steve Waterbury	Assistant Chief, Richmond PD
Dallis Warren	Assistant Chief, Rosenberg PD
George Holub	Lieutenant, Fort Bend ISD PD
Mary S. Ward	Judge, J.P. PCT 1, PL. 2
Joe Lee	Constable, Fort Bend County Pct. 2
Cynthia McConathy	City of Rosenberg
David Rider	Chief, Fort Bend ISD PD
James Davis	Captain, Sugar Land PD
Aaron W. Tyksinski	Chief Deputy, Fort Bend Co. Constable Pct. 3

Behavioral Health:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Name</i>
Connie Almeida, PhD	Director, F.B.C. Behavioral Health Services
Laura Jenkins	Fort Bend Regional Council on Substance Abuse, Inc.
Kelli Metzenthin	AccessHealth, Fort Bend Family Health Center
Chad Bridges	Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office
Mary desVignes-Kendrick	Fort Bend County Health & Human Services
George Patterson	Texana
Stanford Polk	Community Supervision and Corrections Department
Shena Timberlake	Texana Center
Roderick Glass	Director, Mental Health Public Defender's Office
Virginia Rosas	Justice of the Peace Pct. 1, Pl. 2
Beth Wolf	Fort Bend County
Judith Garrett	Mental Health Association of Fort Bend County

Identification of Community Problems

General Public Safety Needs and Issues

Through a process of information sharing and statistical data collection, the governmental agencies, school districts, law enforcement agencies and non-profit agencies in Fort Bend County continue to highlight significant problems faced by children, youth and families.

Continued improvement in the communication and cooperation among various agencies must occur when addressing the contributing factors of crime, e.g., poverty, child abuse, truancy, and teen pregnancy. Also cited were insufficiencies in pro-active areas such as crisis management, conflict resolution, effective parenting, and literacy training.

Lack of public transportation in Fort Bend County, which has a land area of 875 square miles, is a major contributing factor in a multitude of problems faced by residents. Access to service providers and parent involvement in school activities is impeded when transportation is unavailable. Steps are being taken, however, as the Goodman Corporation has been commissioned by the Houston-Galveston Area Council, the Texas Department of Transportation and Fort Bend County to study the need for public transportation. An executive summary will be forwarded to H-GAC upon completion.

Affordable, habitable housing often proves to be inaccessible for many of our residents. Currently, there is a two-year waiting period for families needing housing assistance in this County. Families are often forced to live in sub-standard housing with faulty wiring, plumbing, and other unsafe conditions.

The continued rapid growth of Fort Bend County exacerbates all the problem areas. While the state of Texas grew at a rate of 1.8%, the U.S. Bureau of Census concluded that Fort Bend County grew at a rate of 6% in 2001 and 2002. That growth is predicted to continue - Woods and Poole Economics ranks Fort Bend as 2nd in growth for all U.S. counties with more than 250,000 in population for the years 2003 - 2025.

The Texas State Data Center estimates that the population could reach 761,473 by the year 2020. In other words, it took 160 years for Fort Bend to gain its first 350,000 residents, but will add the next 350,000 residents within the next 20 years.

[2003 Demographic Profile on Fort Bend County](#)

STATS PER 2010 US CENSUS

	<i><u>TEXAS</u></i>	<i><u>Fort Bend County</u></i>
<i>Total Population – 2010</i>	<i>25,145,561</i>	<i>585,375</i>
<i>Population, % change from 2000</i>	<i>20.6%</i>	<i>65.1%</i>
<i>Child population % (under age 18)</i>	<i>27.3%</i>	<i>29.7%</i>
<i>Language other than English spoken in home</i>	<i>33.6%</i>	<i>36.0%</i>
<i>Persons below poverty</i>	<i>17.1%</i>	<i>7.5 %</i>
<i>Households</i>	<i>8,269,046</i>	<i>140,542</i>
<i>Average household size</i>	<i>2.81</i>	<i>3.57</i>

Identification of Community Problems

In each of the areas below, problems are identified and data is included that supports both the existence and severity of the problems as they are found in Fort Bend County. Below is a discussion of the problems, the manner in which the problems are being addressed, and strategically how responses to these community problems could be improved.

Juvenile Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

<p><u>Identified Problem</u></p> <p>1. Juvenile Delinquency and Children In Need of Supervision (status offenses), especially truancy – the “gateway crime”.</p>	<p><u>Data Collection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department • Fort Bend Independent School District • Depelchin Children’s Center • Lamar Consolidated Independent School District • Goodwill Industries of Houston
<p><u>Potential Response to Problem:</u></p> <p>In 2011, there were a total of 2,357 referrals to the Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department. Misdemeanor and status offenses (Children In Need of Supervision cases) comprised 86% of the total and felony offenses were 14% of the total.</p> <p>In 2011, the Probation Department was responsible for supervising a total of 534 juveniles who were placed on formal probation. In addition, the Department supervised a total of 695 juveniles in 2011 that were placed on deferred prosecution.</p> <p>The lack of adequate and consistent supervision by the family and the community is a major contributing factor to delinquency and anti-social behavior among Fort Bend County’s youth. Poorly supervised children are exposed to danger and risk, and are more likely to engage in anti-social, high-risk behavior. This includes truants, dropouts and runaways as well as children who are attending school but lack after-school supervision.</p> <p>Truancy has been clearly identified as a “gateway crime” and one of the early warning signs of students headed for potential delinquent activity, social isolation, or educational failure due to suspension, expulsion, or dropping out.</p> <p>Saved By the Bell</p> <p>One program that started in late 2008, is “Saved By the Bell” Delinquency Reduction Program. In this innovative program, juvenile probation officers act as liaisons to coordinate and provide follow up with the judicial system, but also work with school truancy officers and community resources to address the social factors behind trancies. The following statistics graphically demonstrate the need to have this program implemented in all of the schools in Fort Bend County:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011 statistics indicate that 301 students have completed the program, with 82.4% successfully completing. • Of the total, 74.09% experienced decreases in school suspensions; 89.32% decreased in overall discipline referrals; and, 57.81% improved their GPA.. 	

DePelchin Children's Center STAR Program

The STAR program is a state funded grant designed to serve at-risk youth and families. To qualify for services the family must live in Fort Bend County and have a youth, age 17 or under that is experiencing runaway issues, truancy or family conflict.

STAR Provides:

Crisis Intervention Family Counseling: Short-term crisis intervention counseling offered at our offices or in the client's home or school.

Skills-based Training: Classes or groups for parents and youths over a range of topics, including parenting, anger management, social skills, truancy prevention, problem solving.

STAR services are provided at no cost to the client.

For the past 7 years, STAR has partnered with Judge Clouser in Precinct 2 to provide services to all pre-adjudicated youth. An intensive truancy prevention program was offered to every client that was put on informal probation. Unfortunately, we do not have the statistics specifically on our work with truancy but we do have some information from early 2011 on the number of youth that did not engage in delinquent behavior after receiving our services last year. The outcomes indicate that 93% of the families that received STAR services reported positive outcomes (for presenting problems including, truancy, delinquent behavior, runaway and family conflict) and 97% of the 10-16 year old youths completing the program did not engage in additional delinquent behavior (meaning that there were no other offenses documented).

Goodwill Industries of Houston's Training Young People for Jobs program.

This program is provided in a 7 county area including Fort Bend County. The program focus is on youth between the ages of 14 and 21 who are out-of-school (dropped out or chronically truant, pursuing GED OR completed high school). The program is targeting enrolling 15 youth from the Fort Bend County area and have 11 enrolled right now in the inaugural year. The program assists youth in re-engaging in high school, pursuing a GED or pursuing vocational training with a local junior college. An Education Counselor facilitates the Dare to Dream segment, where the youth are guided to dream about their future and develop concrete life goals. They are then assisted to work backwards to see what steps they need to take to reach those goals. Ultimately, with this educational and employment assistance, these young people are better prepared for job placements in high-skill, high-growth occupations.

Alternative Learning Center

ALC is Lamar CISD's Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP). LCISD provides a school-community guidance center to assist LCISD students with behavioral problems that interfere with their education. Students who engage in serious misconduct that mandates removal to a DAEP are reassigned to the Alternative Learning Center (ALC). Students in grades 6 - 12 assigned to the ALC can be assigned for 20 days, 45 days, or 90 days for discretionary and mandatory offenses. Students in grades K-5 can be assigned for 3 weeks to 6 weeks. ALC collaborates with local law enforcement agencies, the Fort Bend Truancy Project, the Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department, Fort Bend Regional Council, Texana Mental Health Authority, IntraCare and other agencies serving youth and parents to identify and correct factors that adversely affect the education of students assigned. A structured academic and behavioral program is provided to teach appropriate social skills and self-discipline. Uniform dress is required. Parents are required to attend parent education and support sessions for each week of their child's ALC assignment.

Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program

Lamar C.I.S.D. provides a community-based juvenile justice alternative education program (JJAEP) in conjunction with Fort Bend County Commissioners Court, Juvenile Board, Juvenile Probation Department and other school districts in Fort Bend County. Students, in grades 4 – 12, who have committed serious offenses and who have been expelled as mandated by Texas Education Code shall be reassigned to the Fort Bend County Alternative School. Students who have violated the district's Student Code of Conduct may also be expelled to this program. FBCAS serves students from Katy ISD, Needville ISD and Lamar CISD. Uniform dress is required. The setting is referenced as a Juvenile Justice AEP as defined by Texas Education Code and has been cooperatively developed as specified in an interlocal agreement. The length of assignment is determined by the judicial system and/or by Lamar CISD as specified by the memorandum of agreement with the Fort Bend County Juvenile Justice Authorities.

Truancy Diversion Program

Fort Bend ISD offers the Truancy Diversion Program (TDP) to students and parents who are experiencing truancy issues. The program is presented by the Office of Safe and Secure Schools in collaboration with the FBISD social workers from Student Support Services. The TDP is an information-based program offered for parents and students as a preventative measure to provide 1) an alternative to a court referral and 2) to educate parents or guardians and students who are experiencing truancy problems and the consequences associated with unexcused absences. In addition, the program identifies available and appropriate resources for families who are experiencing issues that may be contributing to a student's truancy. The TDP is offered to students and parents with truancy issues once during each school year. The program invited 3410 students during the 2010-2011 school year. Of those, 1736 students and their parents/guardians actually attended. Of the students who attended the TDP in 2010-2011, approximately 56.64% did not receive a truancy citation; 27.14% received one citation; 16.22% received two or more citations. The creation of the consolidated truancy court for Fort Bend County will provide a consistent and timely response to truancy actions with meaningful consequences and utilizing various intervention methods to keep students in school and help provide sufficient guidance in the best interest of the child. FBISD personnel work collaboratively with the court and the juvenile case managers in ensuring that students are in compliance with court orders. Timely court action will enable the district and the County to properly track truancy recidivism data and gauge the effectiveness of the collaborative efforts.

Transitioning up to Success (TUTS)

The TUTS program is a Fort Bend ISD initiative that provides supportive programs to facilitate the transition of children and youth from a correctional program or adjudication back to their high school. The goal is to aid these students' adjustment in their educational environment so that they will be academically successful. A variety of services from individual and group counseling, career and post secondary educational planning, credit recovery/tutorial assistance, as well as parent conferencing is offered. TUTS students are encouraged to take college entrance exams as part of the program. Grades, attendance and discipline are strictly monitored. Consistent contact is maintained with each child's probation officer during the program year. After each student is off formal probation and complete the TUTS program, they are assigned a Graduation Coach mentor who will follow their progress until they graduate from high school. The program was offered only at Willowridge High School during the 2010-2011 school year. 100% of the students who were seniors in the program graduated and had a plan for the following year. 80% of the students saw a drop in discipline referrals and made significant gains in their attendance from the previous year. 83% of the students from last year's TUTS program have started off the 2011-2012 year with passing grades and no truancy or discipline citations.

Identified Problem

2. Need to expand and diversify programs that identify needs of juveniles and provide early intervention services before they enter the juvenile justice system. This would include mentoring programs, a variety of training and support programs for parents of youthful offenders, and intervention targeting education gaps of youth entering the juvenile justice system.

Data Collection

- Lamar Consolidated Independent School District
- Fort Bend Independent School District
- Ridgemont Early Childhood Center
- Parks Youth Ranch

Potential Response to Problem:

At this time, there are limited intervention programs focusing on diverting juveniles from involvement in the juvenile justice system before any type of offense has been committed. This type of intervention needs to start as early as possible recognizing individual, family and other circumstances that may lead to lack of success on the part of a juvenile and to a subsequent involvement in activities that bring them to the attention of the juvenile justice system.

Lamar Consolidated ISD- Student Support Services

Lamar CISD Student Support Services connects parents, students, campus staff, and other key stakeholders together to maximize student success. This group works together to eliminate any barrier to a child not graduating from high school.

1621 Place

1621 Place is a high school program of choice offered to all Lamar CISD high school students who qualify and wish to attend. Students apply, their credits and TAKS status are analyzed and then they go through a testing process before placement. Students stay enrolled on their home high school campus and when they graduate, will have the opportunity to walk with their high school class. Diplomas are awarded by the home campus. 1621's design is that of a self-paced academic center that assists students to learn, grow and become successful members of the community. 1621 offers two tracks for a student to follow. The Diploma track is for juniors or seniors who have earned 12 or more credits and have passed at least 3 of the Exit Level TAKS. Diploma students attend 1621 for a half day (4 hours) in the morning. The ReBound track is for students in grades 9 – 12. ReBound students attend the morning classes at their home campus and the afternoon class at 1621 Place. 1621 averages approximately 50 – 70 graduates each year for the past 10 years.

Intensive Behavior Class

LCISD's Intensive Behavior Class (IBC) is a special educational program for LCISD students in grades 6-12 who exhibit documented and detrimental behavior that may effect on the quality of education provided to the individual or others in the regular classroom environment. IBC serves all 11 LCISD Secondary Campuses. This program seeks to collaborate and/or coordinate with campus mental health workers to stabilize a student's mental & behavioral conditions so the student may return to the home campus. The IBC unit will attempt to make contact with any known case workers, psychiatrists, or other mental health workers to further collaborate an exchange of information during the time a student receives services in the IBC classroom. Placement is available only after it is demonstrated that all options (specialized support/resource, staffing, PASS, IPC, etc. . .) on the home campus have been considered or have proven to be unsuccessful. Students who are returning to the district after a two or more week stay at a residential psychiatric facility may be considered for IBC if they are in grades 6-12 and an emotional or behavioral disability is established. School district personnel will work with the treatment facility to determine the least restrictive environment for the student.

Dads as Mentors

Dads as Mentors is a Fort Bend ISD initiative on all Title I campuses. The premise of this mentoring program is to have fathers as well as positive male role models working with their own children in the home. Fathers are asked to keep a log of extra activities that they engage with their children over one month's time. Activities include spending extra time playing a board game with their child or turning off the television for one night and having a family meeting. The program encourages fathers to pay extra attention to their children in the home. During the evaluation of its first year, fathers found the program to be very helpful in engaging their children in more conversations about learning, school and life.

Ridgemont Early Childhood Center (RMECC)

The Ridgemont Early Childhood Center (RMECC) is a multi-service learning center where children and families can grow together as a community of learners. Located on the property of Ridgemont Elementary School, the Center opened in 2010 to provide early childhood development in an economically-disadvantaged neighborhood located south of Beltway 8 and west of State Highway 288. The Center is designed to address the multi-faceted needs of children and their parents, with a dynamic interconnected system of support.

Purpose: The RMECC is committed to forging strong learning pathways for young children, empowering families, building teacher expertise and sparking community pride.

Services Provided: With support from business and community partners, the RMECC provides a variety of educational, social and health services to participating families.

Services Include: Early Head Start/Head Start (from birth to 5 years of age) FBISD pre-kindergarten, PPCD (Special Education program), Extended Day Program (before and after-school childcare) FBISD Family Literacy, adult English as a Second Language (ESL) adult GED classes , computer classes , parenting classes, health and dental services, social work and psychological services, teacher mentorship program.

Parks Youth Ranch

The Fred and Mabel R. Parks Youth Ranch is the only emergency shelter for at-risk or homeless youth in Fort Bend County. Being able to provide services to homeless youth locally allows them to continue their education in their home school which in turn provides a greater chance that they will complete their high school education. The availability of a youth shelter in Fort Bend County allows families living in or near Fort Bend County to participate in family counseling and visit on a more frequent basis, which in turn makes family reunification more plausible. It also offers youth stability in familiar surroundings. The Fred and Mabel R. Parks Youth Ranch houses three facilities: a counseling center, a recreation center and a 90-day emergency shelter. Referrals come from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Juvenile Probation or voluntary, private placement from the community. Youth referred to the temporary shelter receive services for up to 90 days. Services offered at both the shelter and the George Counseling Center enable the at-risk, unaccompanied, or homeless youth and their families to continue toward problem resolution. Services focus on creating a stable living environment, continuing education and connecting to community based social services.

Services provided at the youth ranch include:

- Counseling at the George Counseling Center is provided for both youth and their families to address specific family issues.
- Emergency/temporary shelter is provided for up to 90 days.
- Transportation to school is provided by the school districts and shelter staff.
- Shelter staff provides or makes arrangements with other service providers to offer tutoring, life skills, behavioral modification and recreation activities for shelter residents.
- Shelter staff also is actively seeking mentoring opportunities through the use of local churches and Fort Bend County families to volunteer to provide security and a sense of belonging to the residents at the shelter. Through the use of mentors, we will foster a mentality which supports the education of the individual as well as the overall

emotional state of the resident.

- Arrangements are made for psychological testing and substance abuse counseling for youth who are in need of those services.
- Shelter staff transport youth to medical and dental services and other appointments as necessary.
- Referrals are made to other agencies as appropriate.
- Follow-ups with clients are done to help ensure that needed services continue and youth are able to maintain permanent living arrangements.

Since opening the doors in March 2011, Parks Youth Ranch has provided over 6000 nights of shelter to over 300 homeless youth. Since January 2012, Parks Youth Ranch has served 25 homeless youth from Fort Bend County and 213 youth have been referred from CPS from Harris County and the Greater Houston area and 25 state wide referrals from CPS.

Project Learn

Project LEARN is a family literacy program offering Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for parents. Children receive homework assistance and tutoring, Pre-kindergarten/Kindergarten instruction or early childhood education. The components of Project LEARN are Adult Education, Early Childhood Education, Parent Education, Interactive Literacy Activities, and Home Instruction. There is something for every family member.

Project LEARN provides early intervention services to youth before they enter the juvenile system?

Project LEARN (Let's Eliminate At-Risk Needs) offers support to parents who have a limitation in participating in their child's education. The program works on the belief that increasing parental involvement in a child's education is good for the kids, for the school system, and for the parents!

Project LEARN gives parents the opportunity to increase their literacy levels, learn how to become involved in their children's education and become part of the network of parents. Additionally, children receive homework assistance, tutoring or early childhood education while their parent is in the classroom.

Project LEARN is a preventive program designed to teach parents how to become partners in their child's education. Through this partnership, parents reduce the probability that their children become non-completers in the community. Studies indicate that children whose parents share their formal education tend to do better in school. Benefits identified include higher grades & test scores, long term academic achievement, and positive attitudes and behaviors.

LEARN offers parent education and support for families. It provides background information on child development and parenting issues to help families understand what activities can be done with their child at home to complement work done in school. LEARN views parents as their child's first teacher and by providing the resources and education, parents help their children succeed!

An Interactive Literacy Activity (ILA) is a component in LEARN. ILAs involve parents and their children completing a literacy-based activity in school under the supervision of district teachers. During ILA, teachers help parents as needed and offer their support and encouragement. This component strengthens the parent's ability to help their child at home. Each month, an ILA is completed at home with the family and the Home Instructor. The parents are strongly encouraged to conduct ILAs at home with their children. This strengthens the role of the parent in their child's social, emotional, and cognitive development. During the ILA the parents observe their children's learning, apply concepts they have learned and discuss with their children what they have learned together.

A Project LEARN survey each year reveals that 98% of participating parents now interact more effectively with their children. They also take their children to the library on a regular basis and request more parent-teacher conferences. About 67% volunteer at their child's school and 95% attend school events.

The early years of a child's life present unique opportunities to lay the foundation for healthy development. Neighborhood characteristics and family income can be risk factors that impact young children's social-emotional health and development. Young children from households of low-income neighborhoods are more likely to experience behavioral problems that negatively impact the development and success. Project LEARN serves only participants with a household income of equal to or less than the federal poverty level.

Children in LEARN tend to have better attendance records than children facing the same obstacles but not enrolled in LEARN. LEARN helps diagnose and treat what could become difficult learning problems down the road. Sixty-three children were screened for development delays this year. Of these 63 children aged 0 – 3 years, all delays were reported and a resource contacted for the child. Currently 7 are receiving specialized education within the school district. According to research, about half of the development delays can be significantly reduced or eliminated by the time a child is old enough for pre-kindergarten if the delays are diagnosed before the child is age 3 years. If the delay were not noted at an early age, the child becomes frustrated in later years and possibly drops out of school. Because eligible participants of LEARN are at or below poverty level, children 0-3 years are not attending pre-school due to the cost. LEARN services are free. 0-3 year olds participate in an early childhood program to prepare them for district Pre-Kindergarten. Regular attendance in the program and home instruction by the parent enables these children at the age of 4 years to begin school above the educational level of children in their class facing the same obstacles.

The real story of LEARN however is high school graduates. Most Project LEARN kids are extremely at-risk and may not have graduated without intervention. You can legitimately say that LEARN played a part in helping every one of those graduates to get their diplomas!

In 2010-2011, 269 students between the ages of 0 – 19 years participated in LEARN. Since the participants in LEARN must be at-risk, one can assume without the early intervention services of Project LEARN, 269 students would have been involved in the judicial system had they not received services from Project LEARN. Of these 269 students, the following successes were accomplished:

- 97% of program 1st and 2nd graders had a 95% attendance record in school
- 100% of program participants were promoted to the next grade level
- 100% of 0-3 year olds were screened for development delays
- 100% of 0-3 year olds with development delays were referred to resources
- 100% of the Parents enrolled in the program improved their Parenting Skills and provided a better environment for their child
- 82% of Kindergarten – 2nd graders met or achieved the district reading assessment level
- 100% of 4 year olds mastered 20 upper and lower case letters of the alphabet
- 100% of 4 year olds enrolled in program improved their expressive vocabulary and word retrieval for Standard American English
- 93% of the parents improved their Oral English Communication skills
- 88% of the parents improved their Written English Communication skills

Identified Problem

3. Inadequate crisis intervention programs and/or shelters for juveniles. Programs for runaways/”unwanted” teens and at-risk teens.

Data Collection

- Lamar Consolidated Independent School District
- Fort Bend Independent School District
- Ridgemont Early Childhood Center
- Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation

Potential Response to Problem:

Statistical information provided by the Juvenile Probation Department as well as the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission indicates an increase in assault family violence charges. Fifty-eight (58) youth were referred to the Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department for the charge of Assault Family Violence in 2011. Part of the growing problem is a lack of services to at-risk youth who need a “cooling off” period when a situation arises in the home that could lead to violence.

In an effort to provide this “cooling off” period, law enforcement officers in the field sometimes resort to filing a Class A assault family violence in order to remove the youth from the home and place them at a juvenile detention facility. This results in the youth

having a juvenile record and further involvement in the legal system when in reality the youth requires counseling in order to deal with family issues. Therefore, there is a need in Fort Bend County to provide a safe place for law enforcement to place a child for a temporary 24-hour and, if necessary, a longer “cooling off” period when there is conflict in the home. This type of shelter could also provide psychological counseling and drug counseling to the troubled youth and parents along with youth and parents who are having issues and are in need of counseling services prior to the youth breaking the law. There are very limited options for crisis intervention and sheltering juveniles in Fort Bend County.

Crisis Intervention Program

The Crisis Intervention program at the Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department receives referrals from parents, schools and law enforcement agencies requesting emergency intervention for juveniles and children who are “out of control”. Included in this program are counseling, explanation of the laws regarding delinquent youth and possible consequences, and information on referral sources for psychological and/or substance abuse counseling. In the 10 years since the program first began, 1,413 children and juveniles have been counseled. Only 127 or 8.9% of those were subsequently referred to the juvenile probation department. This program is run by one probation department staff person and only at the Richmond location. This does not begin to meet the need in terms of number of children and juveniles needing this service at geographically convenient locations around Fort Bend County.

The Parent Project

The Parent Project is a nationally acclaimed program that was created specifically for parents with difficult or out-of-control adolescents. Parents learn and practice specific prevention and intervention strategies for destructive behaviors- truancy, alcohol and other drug use, gangs and other criminal behavior, running away, violence and suicide. Parents are court-ordered into the classes, which are presented for 3 hours a week for 10 weeks.

Since the start date of July 2008, a total of 319 parents attending the program had a total of 219 juveniles involved with the juvenile probation department. A recidivism study was completed on these 109 juveniles six months after the completion of the September 2009 class. The study showed that 155 of the juveniles have not had subsequent referrals to the department after September 2009. This translates into a 71% success rate.

In addition to the Parent Project referrals, a total of 62 juveniles were referred for 1 to 1 Parenting, the Teen Pregnancy Program, and Big Decisions: Making Informed Decisions About Sex. Of the 62 juveniles, 82% successfully completed.

Parks Youth Ranch

The Fred and Mabel R. Parks Youth Ranch was established in response to a gap in community services for the homeless and at-risk youth population, which is growing at a significant rate. Since the beginning of the 2012-13 school year, 70 unaccompanied/homeless youth have registered with Lamar and Fort Bend School Districts. The Fred and Mabel R. Parks Youth Ranch is the only emergency shelter for at-risk or homeless youth in Fort Bend

County. Being able to provide services to homeless youth locally allows them to continue their education in their home school which in turn provides a greater chance that they will complete their high school education. The availability of a youth shelter in Fort Bend County allows families living in or near Fort Bend County to participate in family counseling and visit on a more frequent basis, which in turn makes family reunification more plausible. It also offers youth stability in familiar surroundings.

Constituency served includes:

- Abused, homeless and troubled youth ages 7 -17 in Fort Bend County and the Greater Houston area. CPS may refer youth from outside Region 6. Priority is given to Fort Bend County youth
- We serve youth of both genders, of any ethnicity, from families of any income level.
- Youth involved in Class C misdemeanor cases or status offenses.
- Youth referred by law enforcement for a cooling off period when there is a threat of violence in the home.
- Other Fort Bend County youth who request available services

The Fred and Mabel R. Parks Youth Ranch houses three facilities: a counseling center, a recreation center and a 90-day emergency shelter. Referrals come from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Juvenile Probation or voluntary, private placement from the community. Youth referred to the temporary shelter receive services for up to 90 days. Services offered at both the shelter and the George Counseling Center enable the at-risk, unaccompanied, or homeless youth and their families to continue toward problem resolution. Services focus on creating a stable living environment, continuing education and connecting to community based social services.

Services provided at the youth ranch include:

- Counseling at the George Counseling Center is provided for both youth and their families to address specific family issues.
- Emergency/temporary shelter is provided for up to 90 days.
- Transportation to school is provided by the school districts and shelter staff.
- Shelter staff provides or makes arrangements with other service providers to offer tutoring, life skills, behavioral modification and recreation activities for shelter residents.
- Arrangements are made for psychological testing and substance abuse counseling for youth who are in need of those services.
- Shelter staff transport youth to medical and dental services and other appointments as necessary.
- Referrals are made to other agencies as appropriate.
- Follow-ups with clients are done to help ensure that needed services continue and youth are able to maintain permanent living arrangements.

Since opening our doors in March 2011, the Parks Youth Ranch has provided over 6000 nights of shelter to over 300 homeless youth. Since January 2012, Parks Youth Ranch has served 25 homeless youth from Fort Bend County and 213 youth have been referred from CPS from Harris county and the Greater Houston area and 25 state wide referrals from CPS.

<p><u>Identified Problem</u></p> <p>4. Limited availability of programs to provide adequate mental health, behavioral health and substance abuse treatment for youth.</p>	<p><u>Data Collection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Department of Health and Human Services • Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department • FBISD Parents Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) Drug and Violence Survey 2010 • LCISD Safe and Drug Free Schools Survey 2012
<p><u>Potential Response to the Problem:</u></p> <p>The juvenile justice system has become the default system for providing mental health services to children. It is estimated one out of five juvenile detainees meet the criteria for a serious emotional disturbance (US Department of Health and Human Services, et al (1999). Higher prevalence rates among juvenile delinquent youth compared to the general population have also been found for affective disorders, anxiety disorders, and attention deficit disorders (Otto et al., 1992, Edens & Otto, 1997).</p> <p>In order to estimate the prevalence rate of moderate to severely mentally ill juvenile detainees in the Fort Bend County Juvenile Detention Center, the number of children taking psychotropic medication was examined. During the fourth quarter of 2009, 12 of 54 detainees (22% of the daily census on a random day) were prescribed at least one psychotropic medication. In addition, there were other detained children who met the criteria for a mental disorder other than Oppositional Defiant Disorder or Conduct Disorder who were not prescribed psychotropic medication but were involved in traditional counseling. Note: Between 2005 and 2009, random checks revealed an average rate of 20% of juveniles prescribed psychotropic medicine regardless of a change in census. In 2010, 54 juveniles in the system were given psychiatric evaluations.</p> <p>Fort Bend County youth remain at risk of becoming involved with dangerous drugs. Lamar Consolidated ISD and Fort Bend ISD regularly conduct surveys in their large districts. A compilation of the latest survey data (2012) indicates that youth have an uncharacteristically low perception of risk associated with alcohol use when compared to their perception of risk regarding the dangers of tobacco. This is interesting because the 2012 statewide statistics report that alcohol continues to be the most widely used substance among secondary school students with 63 percent in 2008 reporting they had used alcohol at some point in their lives. Marijuana remained the most commonly used illegal drug among 7-12 graders. About 25 percent in 2012 reported having smoked marijuana in their lives. Past-month use of marijuana was reported by 10 percent of the responding youth. The 2012 prevalence rates were still higher than the lowest rates in 1992. About 6.8 percent of Texas teens reported lifetime use of cocaine/crack, and 2.2 percent reported past-month use. Locally of the 7-12 graders surveyed in Lamar Consolidated ISD, 4.4% indicated using tobacco within the last</p>	

month, while 9% indicated that they had used alcohol in the last month. Fifteen percent of the students indicated using an illicit drug within the previous month while 3% indicate use in their lifetime.

This information is significant and it provides one example of the continued importance of increasing prevention resources for substance abuse and affiliated behavioral health issues. School and community-based substance abuse and violence prevention programs are effective measures to reduce the number of youth who become involved in both. Helping our young people understand, practice and eventually master strong coping abilities through asset based programs and practices reduces substance abuse and associated anti-social behaviors. Mental health awareness education is important to young people as well. Knowledge of mental health disorders, their signs, symptoms and impact helps young people understand that mental health is important and that they can effectively address and manage their life situation. Awareness programs that promote an open dialogue and educate youth about where to seek help, and increased availability of youth programs for co-occurring mental health/substance abuse disorders will benefit this community.

Victim Issues

(listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

<u>Identified Problem</u>	<u>Data Collection</u>
<p>1. Child Abuse / neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence of child abuse/neglect in Fort Bend County • Violence against children • Lack of appropriate, specialized treatment services for abused and neglected children • Lack of appropriate, specialized treatment services for non-offending caregivers • Lack of appropriate, specialized treatment services for alleged adult and juvenile offenders • Lack of available licensed foster care homes and shelters • Lack of funding to assist family/kinship placements for children in foster care • Need for system and facility to meet acute and non-acute sexual assault exam needs for children • Lack of parent/child visitation program (training, facility, protocol, volunteers, etc.) to create emotional and physical bonding between parents and children • Need for expanded program to serve “at risk” teens transitioning to adult life. • Need for customized program to improve graduation rates, training in “life skills”, budgeting, employment, etc. • Need for expanded program for “at risk” infants and toddlers (0-3 years) in foster care to improve wellness, family reunification and adoption rates. • Need for customized program for “at risk” children ages 4-13 to improve health, education, and social well being. 	<p>Child Advocates of Fort Bend</p> <p>Texas Department of Family & Protective Services</p> <p>Fort Bend County Attorney’s Office</p>

- Need for parenting classes that provide hands on training to improve wellness, family reunification, and prevention of child abuse.
- Lack of prevention programs in schools to educate children and school personnel about symptoms, protocols and services available in Fort Bend County for child abuse and neglect.
- Number of children needing adoptive homes
- Lack of collaborative efforts to meet needs of abused/neglected children
- Absence of available and affordable transportation for children in the foster care system and child victims of abuse who live at home and their non-offending caregivers
- Absence of transitional housing and services for children aging out of foster care
- Number of children serving as victims/witnesses in criminal court system and the associated trauma
- Need for more foster homes in Fort Bend County

Lack of mentoring program for child victims of abuse/neglect but not in foster

Potential Response to Problem:

The child welfare and legal systems have been, and remain, overburdened with child abuse cases. Social workers, attorneys and judges cannot give these cases the attention they need in order to find appropriate and timely solutions for children who suffer from these crimes. As part of this process, children go to court where judges must weigh the evidence available to make important decisions that greatly impact their lives. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) are appointed to every child in protective custody in Fort Bend County. Generally volunteers carry only one case, know more about the child than anyone else in the case, and by representing the child's best interest in court, serve as an extra set of eyes and ears for the judge.

Children in care of the state face many difficulties, both because of the original abuse and because of the lack of permanency in their lives. Too many are forced to live in a succession of different homes and shelters, and remain in care for the rest of their childhood. Children who suffer from abuse and neglect are much more likely to grow up with unmet medical, emotional, mental health and social needs. Low academic performance creates serious long-term

consequences. Roughly 50% of these children repeat at least one grade, are below grade level or never finish high school. Too many end up in the juvenile justice system or the adult prison population.

The problems of the child welfare systems are magnified when infant and toddlers are involved. Nationally, they comprise the largest cohort of young children in care- accounting for one in three admissions. Once they have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care, infants and toddlers are more likely than older children to be re-abused and neglected and to stay in foster care. Infants and toddlers are the most vulnerable to the effects of maltreatment. The effects of this maltreatment can have lifelong implications if not addressed properly. Research shows that young children who have experienced physical abuse have lower social competence, show less empathy for others, have difficulty recognizing others' emotions, and are more likely to have deficits in IQ scores, language ability and school performance than children who have not been maltreated. Infants and toddlers are disproportionately at risk for maltreatment. They account for over three-quarters of child maltreatment fatalities. Because these early years set the stage for all that follows, they hold the greatest danger for long-term damage and the greatest potential for successful intervention. Most of these maltreated babies are under age one and more than 1/3 were harmed during their first week of life. In addition to the negative and sometimes lasting impact on development, health, and mental health, child abuse costs this country an estimated \$124 billion each year (CDC- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). This data highlights the importance of responding to child maltreatment and its impact on very young children and their families. The CASA program has developed an infant and toddler team to train volunteers to work with this special population; however, there continues to be a need for specialized programs to provide more hands on training for the parents. An example would be the HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) program. This program is designed to work with parents in their homes and help them prepare their children for school. This program allows a partnership between the parent and provider. The hope is to give the parents tools and materials that enable the parent to work directly with their child and recognize developmental milestones. This type of service would lessen the risk of maltreatment for this age group.

Research has found that foster children face roadblocks that other economically disadvantaged children do not face. Children in foster care reported they had concerns about maintaining ties with their biological parents and caring for siblings that distracted them from school work. Foster children reported they often avoided social interactions with peers in order to keep their foster care status hidden. Loss for a foster child is not only the loss of family, but of community, friends, and traditional support systems. All foster children, to some degree, have experienced trauma through physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse. The effects of trauma for the child are cumulative and often lead to social and learning problems. Most foster children have difficulty trusting adults who can help and support them. When a child is placed in foster care, it immediately decreases that child's chance at academic success. Students lose 4-6 months of academic progress every time they change schools and attend an average of 6 different schools in their K-12 experience. Children in long term foster care average ten (10) different moves during their first three (3) years in care. As a result, 25 percent do not graduate from high school.

Over the past 20 years in our work with abused children in Fort Bend County, it has become apparent that we need to provide children aged 6-13 with specialized services and targeted support. These children are at a critical age in establishing their values, character, educational

performance, self-esteem, connections with their peers and with adult role models. If we wait until these children get to high school, it is too late to redirect antisocial behavior, low self esteem, poor performance in school, high dropout rates, teen pregnancy, involvement in criminal activity, and drug and alcohol abuse. In 2012, Child Advocates of Fort Bend piloted and implemented a new, targeted program called *N.E.S.T. – Nurturing Education and Social Triumphs* that incorporates three areas of focus: education, social skills, and health.

- **Educational Achievement** – setting solid academic foundations to put elementary and middle school children on the path to graduate from high school and pursue higher education with a college or technical school degree;
- **Social Skills** – building high self esteem, making good choices, peer pressure, involvement in extracurricular and service activities; and
- **Health** – setting in place habits for healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, exercise, avoidance of alcohols, drugs and teen pregnancy and weight management.

In 2013, Child Advocates of Fort Bend is seeking funds to fully implement and serve all the children in our program within the age ranges of 6-13. *N.E.S.T.* serves the “gap” years between two other existing programs at Child Advocates of Fort Bend. Five years ago, we started two specialized programs: The Infant and Toddler Program serving ages 0-5 and the WINGS Program for teenagers age 14-18, both of which have become models for other programs around the state and the country. The outcomes speak to the impact we have had on these children’s lives. In our Infant and Toddler Program, we have expedited placement of babies into permanent homes (either reuniting with parents, placing with relatives or facilitating adoptions) from an average duration of 3 years to expedited placement within 18 months. Over the last 7 years (2005-2012), in our WINGS Program for teenagers, we have increased high school graduation rates from 42% (2005) to 100% (2012) and increased college enrollment 87% (2012) compared to a national average of 3% . We need to continue and expand the WINGS and Infant and Toddler Programs.

However, it is also time to focus on those children who fall in between these two age groups. Children aged 6- 13 years have an enormous need for early intervention, mentoring and support to set out on positive educational, emotional and lifestyle paths and not fall victim to the common problems impacting foster care and abused children.* For these children, there is an opportunity to build self-esteem and get children connected to positive adult role models at an early age.

In addition to those children who are in the care of the state in the foster care systems, there is a largely separate group of children who are victims of sexual and serious physical abuse. Many of these children (98%) continue to live at home with non-offending family members. These children bear the burden of the trauma of the abuse itself, coupled with remaining in an environment (home, neighborhood, school, etc.) that gave rise to the trauma in the first place. In 1997, The Children’s Advocacy Center began providing services to these children. The

Children's Advocacy Center coordinates a multidisciplinary approach to the investigation, assessment, prosecution and treatment of sexual and serious physical abuse of children. Services include forensic interviewing, criminal court advocacy, case management, therapy and sexual assault exams referrals.

If a child victim's outcry of abuse is handled improperly, it can result in increased trauma for children who have already experienced unimaginable suffering. Children subjected to multiple interviews by different people or investigators at different locations are more likely to leave out important details of the abuse during each interview or shut down completely as investigators continue to question them. Coordination in all aspects of the investigation, treatment and prosecution of these cases is crucial for protecting the children from further abuse and developing sound prosecutorial cases.

According to the American Medical Association, the lasting effects of childhood sexual abuse are associated with a significantly higher lifetime prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety disorders including panic attacks, as well as drug and alcohol problems. Left untreated, abuse children can be subjected to a lifetime of battling the effects of their childhood trauma. Additionally, according to Nancy Kellogg, University of Texas Health Science Center of San Antonio/Department of Pediatrics, 40% of abused children will be re-abused before their eighteenth birthday.

Children alleged to have been sexually abused should be medically evaluated to address any health concerns resulting from the abuse. Sexual assault exams also document any acute or long-term evidence of abuse, which can be critical to prosecuting child abuse cases.

2011	child population in Fort Bend	137,870
2011	child abuse / neglect investigations by CPS in Fort Bend County:	2,032
2011	child abuse / neglect cases confirmed in Fort Bend County:	435
2011	children removed for abuse/neglect in Ft Bend County:	82
2011	child abuse / neglect related fatalities in Ft. Bend County:	4
2011	children in substitute care	270
2011	forensic interviews of child victims in Fort Bend County:	772
2011	children provided with Children's Advocacy Center specialized therapy services	189
2011	children receiving criminal court orientation/ accompaniment	206
2011	children served by CASA volunteers	282
2011	hours donated by Child Advocates of Fort Bend volunteers	4,631
2011	miles driven by CASA volunteers	45,275

Identified Problem**Data Collection****2. Victim witness services for children**

Child Advocates of Fort Bend

Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office

Potential Response to Problem:

In 2007, the Children's Advocacy Center began providing specialized criminal court advocacy services to children. Children who are victims of crime or witnesses to acts of violence require special assistance in order to understand and participate in the criminal justice system without being further traumatized. The criminal court system, with its often-confusing language and procedures, was not designed with children in mind. Parents and guardians are also confused and overwhelmed by the intricacies of the legal system. But if perpetrators of crimes against children are to be held accountable, children must be prepared to testify in criminal proceedings. The Children's Advocacy Center provides information on legal procedures, emotional support, referrals, court orientation, and accompaniment to court.

The Children's Advocacy Center is the only program providing these comprehensive services, including a specialized court orientation program for children. It is imperative that these services continue to be available to the children and families of Fort Bend County that have been touched by abuse, violence and crime.

Identified Problem**Data Collection****3. Victim witness services for Adults**

Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office

Potential Response to Problem:

Fort Bend County continues to be one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. Along with that population growth comes an increase in crime. That increase requires additional personnel to work the increasing caseload and provide victims with the assistance that is mandated as well as the additional services they need and deserve.

In 2011, the Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office assisted 4,173 victims with court setting notification, case status, court accompaniment, Victim Impact Statements Crime Victim Compensation, court procedure, referrals, follow-up, and other services.

The District Attorney's Office strives to assist victims with information, status, and support regarding their cases. Other important duties include addressing a victim's specific needs and making appropriate referrals for counseling and other resources. It is imperative that the crime victims of Fort Bend County have these services available on a consistent basis.

Identified Problem**Data Collection****4. Limited accessible and available emergency shelters**Fort Bend County Women's Center
Uniform Crime Report, Texas**Potential Response to Problem:**

The Fort Bend County Women's Center Shelter is the only provider of emergency shelter services for survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse in the county. The Center provides emergency shelter for up to 65 women and children at a time. Entrance into the Shelter is limited to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children.

In 2011 the Fort Bend County Women's Center served 349 domestic violence/sexual assault victims, women and children, in its shelter. Referrals to alternative shelters are given to people who do not qualify for Women's Center services or for whom there is insufficient space in the Shelter. However, resources are limited and most referrals must be made to sources outside Fort Bend County due to lack of emergency shelters available in the county. In 2011 the Fort Bend County Women's Center Hotline received 34,563 calls; 556 callers were referred to other shelters due to lack of space at the Shelter.

Identified Problem**Data Collection****5. Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Prevention programs need to be in place in all schools in Fort Bend County**Fort Bend County Women's Center
Uniform Crime Report, Texas**Potential Response to Problem:**

In 2010, there were 2,927 incidents of domestic violence reported to law enforcement in Fort Bend County. It is estimated that only one in ten battered women actually report their abuse to law enforcement, making this a significant problem.

In 2011, the Fort Bend County Women's Center served 1,231 men, women, and children domestic violence victims and 380 sexual assault victims. Domestic violence affects people of all ages, races, and economic status, but the majority of Fort Bend County Women's Center clients have income levels below \$10,000 per year. Providing safe haven and support services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault is essential to helping stop the cycle of violence. Children raised in violent homes are much more likely to grow up to be batterers or battered themselves. Services such as emergency shelter, crisis intervention, counseling, legal advocacy, medical services, job and housing placement and other supportive services are very important to the success of women trying to start new, self sufficient lives for themselves and their children. Transitional and permanent housing through Tenant Based Rental Assistance is an essential component of a successful self sufficiency program for this population. In 2011, Fort Bend County Women's Center provided 168 housing units.

The Fort Bend County Women’s Center has created an awareness curriculum titled “Creating Healthy Relationships” targeting middle school and high school. This program is being presented in a limited number of schools at this time and needs to be expanded to all schools. An indication of this need is contained in the latest available drug and school safety survey from Lamar Consolidated Independent School District (LCISD). This self-reporting assessment given to a total of 10,383 LCISD students indicated that 13.6% of high school students and 17.8% of middle school/junior high students think that slapping around girlfriends or boyfriends in certain situations is acceptable.

The Fort Bend County Women’s Center has also worked with the Office of Attorney General of Texas to develop Primary Prevention programs to help prevent the root causes of sexual assault. The agency has created a primary prevention curriculum entitled “Impact, Empower and Engage” that is currently being presented to middle school and high school youth. The program is eight sessions and is designed to engage individuals, both males and females, to become integral actors in the prevention of not only sexual violence but violence in general.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

6. Continuing need for additional resources for prosecution and follow up investigation of protective orders and criminal cases involving domestic violence

Fort Bend County District Attorney’s Office

Potential Response to Problem:

As Fort Bend County’s population continues to grow rapidly, there will be a continued strain on the system. From January 2012 through October 2012, the District Attorney’s Office received 1301 domestic violence related cases from law enforcement and possible prosecution.

The Fort Bend County DA’s Office continues to vigorously prosecute these cases but needs additional resources for investigation and prosecution.

Law Enforcement Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Identified Problem

1. There is a need to expand law enforcement personnel and associated prosecutorial resources with the proportionate growth of the County.

Data Collection

2010 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Profile
2010 Crime in Texas publication put out of the Department of Public Safety
DOJ/BJA Data Analysis

Potential Response to Problem:

Per the 2010 Crime in Texas publication distributed by the Department of Public Safety, the statewide ratio is 2.18 officers per 1,000 population.

In Fort Bend County, the majority of the police departments apply their own subjective formulas to this ratio to determine the law enforcement needs for their municipality. For instance, the Missouri City Police Department uses a workload analysis that looks at the time each officer spends on various law enforcement tasks and also factors in a number of other variables, such as the number of calls for service. This analysis will determine the number of officers, investigators and support staff that they need.

In the unincorporated areas of the County, which are handled by the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office, there has been tremendous growth. As an example, the Sheriff's Office needs an additional 238 officers to match this increase. All law enforcement agencies within the county will have a similar need for additional officers/personnel.

The continued rapid growth of Fort Bend County exacerbates all the problem areas. While the state of Texas grew 7.9% from April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004, the U.S. Bureau of Census concluded that Fort Bend County grew at a rate of 24.9%. That growth is predicted to continue. The Texas State Data Center estimates that the population could reach 845,058 by the year 2020. The estimated 2011 population for Fort Bend County is 605,000.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

2. Lack of equipment and updated equipment and Technology in the areas of investigative, Patrol, tactical, communication, radios, surveillance, identification, and evidence gathering.

Fort Bend County Law Enforcement Survey 2012

including City Police Departments, Constables, District Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Office

Potential Response to Problem:

Fort Bend County continues to grow at approximately 30,000 residents per year. The present estimated population is over 605,000. A proportionate amount of equipment and updated equipment and technology is needed to assist all law enforcement in the performance of their duties, e.g. MDC's, mobile and portable radios, mobile and stationary videos, ATV's, bicycles, vehicles, surveillance cameras, evidence gathering technology, etc.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

3. Lack of specialized and skills-based training for law enforcement and other public safety professionals in this region.

Fort Bend County Public Safety Training Needs Assessment

Potential Response to Problem:

Fort Bend County recently conducted a yearlong public safety training needs assessment involving department heads from all of the major Police, Fire, and EMS agencies in Fort Bend County. Collectively, these agencies employ over 1,200 full time law enforcement and 300 additional public safety professionals. The most glaring deficiency noted by the committee involved a lack of joint multi-disciplinary training in general and specialized and skills-based training for law enforcement in particular. The single largest obstacle is funding. According to the committee's findings, the only cost-effective solution to this problem is to conduct this type of training on a regional level. Many fast growing communities around the nation have solved similar problems by pooling resources on a regional level. The Houston-Galveston Area Council is in a unique position to provide both funding and leadership toward the problem area.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

4. Need for a Crime Data/Information Sharing Initiative (Interoperability) linking all Fort Bend County law enforcement agencies. Need for standardized electronic Records Management Systems (RMS) in all county law enforcement agencies. Need for a county wide electronic filing capabilities between criminal justice system partners and the DA's office.

Fort Bend County Law Enforcement Survey

Potential Response to Problem:

Currently the law enforcement agencies in Fort Bend County do not have the ability to share information. Having an integrated system would provide interagency telecommunications and information services, i.e., centralized indices of people, things and events of interest to more than one agency, through a central repository. It would enhance agencies' ability to communicate with each other to identify missing persons, known criminal offenders, people involved in crime, and property involved in crime. The impetus of this initiative is to link the different records management systems to a central repository enabling local law enforcement to query people and property involved in crime, members of criminal gangs, stolen property, criminal suspects, criminal methods of operation, reported crime, reported arrests, and to share crime bulletins about major crimes.

A survey was sent to eight selected law enforcement entities in Fort Bend County (Sheriff's Office, Stafford, Sugar Land, Missouri City, Katy, Richmond, Rosenberg and Needville) and five agencies responded. Their responses to the survey illustrated that every participating agency is in favor or supports interagency data information sharing and further believes information or data sharing can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all police agencies in prevention and detecting crime.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

5. There is a lack of law enforcement personnel to register sex offenders, monitor them for compliance and work cases as investigators.

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office and other Law Enforcement entities within Fort Bend County

Potential Response to Problem:

At the current time, there is only one known full time investigator located at the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office who is only able to register the sex offenders and provide minimum coverage for compliance and investigation.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

6. Lack of an effective means for Fort Bend County law enforcement agencies to deal with mental health calls for service and mental health commitments.

Fort Bend County Law Enforcement Survey

Potential Response to Problem:

Without an effective means to deal with this issue, many law enforcement agencies have had to deploy already taxed internal human resources to provide services in taking charge of persons suspected of being mentally ill.

According to the law enforcement survey, there is a consensus to develop a program for all agencies in Fort Bend County to handle mental health issues including mental health commitments ordered by a court of jurisdiction. The mental health officer would be specifically trained and equipped to follow the mental health protocol as set by statute or policy, expediting the process to ensure the person gets the help he or she needs.

Of those agencies responding to the survey, each answer mental health calls for service and transport annually. In 2012, the average number of calls for transport for the Sheriff's Office was 54 State hospital and local trips per month. This does not include processing and associated paperwork.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

7. There is a lack of investigators assigned to specifically investigate the violent crimes against women cases in Fort Bend County. Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office

Potential Response to Problem:

Fort Bend County has a population of approximately 605,000 in 2011. In 2010, the female population accounted for over 50% of the Fort Bend County population. Fort Bend County is currently listed as 27th in the nation and 2nd in the state of Texas among the fastest growing counties. For an example, at the Sheriff's Office, the violent crimes against women cases increased approximately 25% from 2007 to 2010, and the number of cases as of November 1, 2011, has already exceeded the total number of violent crimes against women cases for 2010.

Currently, many agencies have no investigators that are specifically assigned to investigate violent crimes against women. Due to the limited number of investigators assigned to the Special Crimes Unit and the high volume of cases assigned to each investigator, investigations cannot be conducted expeditiously. If more investigators were assigned to investigate violent crimes against women, violent offenders would be removed from society in a timelier manner, preventing more women from falling prey to violent offenders and becoming a victim of a violent crime and a statistic.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

8. Lack of personnel to document gangs and their members as well as investigate gang-related crimes. Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office and other Law Enforcement entities within Fort Bend County

Potential Response to Problem:

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office reports there are 55 gangs documented with over 850 members and/or associates primarily on the east end of Fort Bend County. It has been identified that many of these documented members are responsible for many crimes in the area. Several gangs have been identified that are currently actively recruiting in many of the schools. Because of the State's laws regarding documenting gang members and maintaining an intelligence data base, there is a requirement to constantly review the data and update the members' last involvement with the law enforcement or purge that data entirely. There are only four known fulltime investigators in all Fort Bend County Law Enforcement Agencies to document, investigate and maintain the intelligence database. It has been proven that Fort Bend County currently has a large population of gang members and there is a need for the County to have a fully functioning gang unit.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

9. There is a lack of investigators assigned to specifically investigate the family violence cases in Fort Bend County.

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office

Potential Response to Problem:

For example, at the Sheriff's Office, there are 7 investigators who average 80 cases a month with a total of 7,000 yearly involving family violence, sexual assault, non-family assaults against women, robbery and homicide.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

10. Child pornography is a growing problem in the County. There is a lack of personnel, equipment and technology to keep up with the demand for investigation.

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office and other Law Enforcement entities within Fort Bend County

Potential Response to Problem:

The law enforcement-only sensitive program, "Operation Fair Play", results in finding a minimum of 100 offenders observing multiple child pornographic sites every month. Investigation of each possible infraction is not possible with the present manpower.

The Child Protection System is an evolutionary step in the pursuit of innovation. You may be familiar with "Operation Fairplay", a solution allowing Law Enforcement to target those who traffic images of child sexual abuse. Child Protection System builds on top of the success of Fairplay to bring open access to investigators around the world.

Research into the Child Protection System database indicated that from October 2011 to October 2012, approximately 180 offenders were observed in the Fort Bend County area.

The Houston Metro Internet Crimes Against Children's Task Force (ICAC) is comprised of an (8) county area of operation including Fort Bend County. With additional resources, Law Enforcement Agencies within Fort Bend County could affiliate with the ICAC Task Force.

Identified Problem

11. Need for a 24 hour District Attorney intake system based on the growth of the county population and after hours / week-end referrals to the District Attorney's Office.

Data Collection

Fort Bend County Law Enforcement
Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office

Potential Response to Problem:

The Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office currently has a prosecutor available on call after business hours who is available to law enforcement agencies to answer intake/charging questions and assist officers in drafting search and arrest warrant affidavits. Once an offender is booked into the county jail, the arresting officer must draft an affidavit which contains sufficient facts to justify the suspect's continued detention to a magistrate. This affidavit is read, and occasionally supplemented by, that prosecutor. However, the ultimate decision to accept or reject the case is made several days later, after reasonable time is given to the officer to fully document his offense report. This can ultimately lead to the possibility of a person, adult or juvenile, being incarcerated, only to later have the District Attorney's Office reject the charges.

The Harris County system provides several Assistant District Attorneys who are physically present 24/7. Officers are required to provide the Assistant District Attorneys with sufficient information over the phone prior to booking the suspects in city jail, which will substantiate the charge. Further, these departments must complete their offense reports prior to transferring the suspects to county jail. This is usually required within forty-eight hours. This ultimately accelerates the intake process, as it relates to the work of the police agency and the District Attorney's Office.

Identified Problem

12. Shortage of Crime Victim Liaisons and Coordinators in criminal justice areas to handle all aspects of the victims' rights from the time of the incident throughout the entire criminal justice process.

Data Collection

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office and other Law Enforcement entities within Fort Bend County

Potential Response to Problem:

In all areas of criminal and juvenile justice, the role of a trained victim liaison is invaluable in informing the victim and family of the various proceedings.

In addition, these crime victim liaisons can be responsible for ensuring that the crime victims receive their financial restitution as ordered by the courts.

The number of Crime Victim Liaison positions need to increase proportionately with the increasing referrals and caseloads.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

13. A severe lack of county and school resource officers with specialized training and equipment for truancy and youth delinquency prevention programs in Fort Bend County.

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office and other Law Enforcement entities within Fort Bend County

Potential Response to Problem:

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office has two units composed of school resource officers that provide award-winning programs to school aged youth in Fort Bend County. During the 2010-2011 school year, the Truancy Abatement and Assistance Program Deputies made 290 presentations to 24,000 students in 90 area elementary, middle, junior high and high schools. The presentations include the highly requested "Now That You're 10", "Before It's Too Late" and "Legal Terms" programs. Likewise, the Kids and Cops Unit Deputies teach the very popular (Stranger Danger Awareness" program to grades K-5. Fifth graders are also exposed to an 8 week curriculum that covers peer pressure, resistance techniques, consequences, stress, gang awareness, and alternatives to drug abuse. The four-day Kids and Cops Summer camp promotes leadership skills, boosts self-esteem and advocates teamwork to students ages 10-12.

The seven school districts in Fort Bend County are experiencing consistent growth in student population.

In November 2011 Fort Bend County created a Consolidated Truancy Court with partial funding support from Fort Bend Independent School District (FBISD) providing for the filing of all FBISD truancy cases in a single court. The creation of the consolidated truancy court for Fort Bend County provides a consistent and timely response to truancy actions with meaningful consequences. The court utilizes various intervention methods to keep students in school and all of the court's interventions are guided by actions in the best interest of the child. As of November 1, 2012, the court has heard approximately 5,600 truancy cases.

However, during this first year of this specialized court's existence, gaps in resources have been identified. Approximately half of the cases filed have not been resolved due to the students' and parents' failure or refusal to attend court. Additional police officers are needed to serve summons and warrants generated by this court, as well as provide additional court security and bailiff services when needed.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

14. Lack of personnel to investigate financial fraud crimes to include Identity Theft Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office

Potential Response to Problem:

According to the Federal Trade Commission 2005 report, Identify Theft is one of the fastest growing crimes and has affected over 8 million people. Financial Crimes reported to the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office from 2003 to present have increased by a total of 89%. An average Identify Theft investigation can be expected to take 15-20 hours of investigative time. Currently there are 4 fulltime investigators within the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office who are assigned an average of 30 cases each per month. As a result, the investigative manpower available to address these cases is lacking at the very least.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

15. Need for a full accredited regional crime lab-forensic lab-DNA based on growth of the regional population and felony crimes against persons. Regional Public Safety Academy Study and Sugar Land Police Department

Potential Response to Problem:

Most police departments do a lot their own lab work and use an array of different labs. The Department of Public Safety's Crime Lab is overloaded. With the growing population of the region comes a proportionate increase in criminal activities, which require specialized investigative techniques. At the present time, all lab work is sent to outside agencies. The law enforcement agency is forced to wait on results to be sent back to them from the outside source, which can severely hinder an on-going investigation.

Most Law Enforcement Agencies within Fort Bend County submit DNA evidence to the Texas DPS Crime Laboratory. The turn-around time for this analysis is approximately 9-30 months. The turn-around times for these requests varies greatly depending on current caseload. For example, in Fiscal Year 2011-2012 the Sugar Land Police Department submitted 550 items to outside laboratories for analysis, averaging almost 46 items per month. Texas law (CCP Chapter 38) and the industry standard for crime laboratories, requires crime laboratories to obtain accreditation in all analytical disciplines applied through the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors / Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB)

Identified Problem

Data Collection

16. In severe cases of domestic violence, sexual abuse, robbery and homicide there is an insufficient victim protection system.

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office
Fort Bend County Community Corrections
and Supervision Department

Potential Response to Problem:

There is a heightened awareness about the lack of protection for victims of violent crime, in particular women who have separated from their abusive partner and have filed a charge of domestic violence against them. This is prior to any court action that would place the perpetrator on any kind of monitoring system. When the perpetrator is pending probation or placed on probation, the Community Corrections and Supervision Department issues ankle monitors but these systems of electronic monitoring is focused on the perpetrators rather than on the victims.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

17. There is a need for an automated system for handling Emergency Protective Orders, Temporary Ex Parte orders and Formal Protective Orders. In addition, there is insufficient staff to process and maintain all these orders.

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office

Potential Response to Problem:

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office reports that at this time, all Emergency Protective Orders (temporary orders for 30 to 90 days) are on paper. These are done in the Fort Bend County Jail upon the arrest of the alleged abuser. The formal Protective Order (for 2 years) comes from the District Attorney's Office, is sent to a Judge who signs the Order, and then is given to a Constable to serve.

Temporary Ex Parte Orders fill in the gaps between the Emergency Protective Order and the short period of time before a formal Protective Order can be filed. As of January 1, 2008, Temporary Ex Parte violations can be arrested. This will mean more paper to process.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

18. Need for a regional Medical Examiner's Office based on the region's population and number of referrals requiring autopsy.

Regional Public Safety Academy Study

Potential Response to Problem:

The region including Fort Bend County does not have a medical examiner and contracts with outside sources in another county. This consequently causes delays in investigations. As an example, final autopsy reports may take up to sixty days to receive. The law enforcement agency is forced to wait on results to be sent back to them from the outside source, which can severely hinder an on-going investigation. During Fiscal Year 2011 there were 226 autopsies performed at a cost of \$419,792.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

19. There is a need in Fort Bend County, and the Jurisdictions within, to continue developing a network of intelligence and information-sharing relating to the detection and prevention of Terrorism. This effort, in concert with the Houston Regional Intelligence Service Center (HRISC), is accomplished through a coordinated network of Intelligence Analysts from the different Law Enforcement agencies within Fort Bend County.

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office

Potential Response to Problem:

Funding for Analysts positions and the needed technological hardware and software, are critical to developing and sharing actionable intelligence for the detection and prevention of terrorism within the County.

The creation of a Fort Bend Satellite Center, which serves as an extension of HRISC, would allow for improved intelligence and information sharing for Fort Bend County and the Jurisdictions within. This would also improve information sharing with our regional partners through HRISC. This cannot be accomplished without an increase in manpower, equipment, training and technology.

Behavioral Health Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

1. Crisis response and diversion services for persons with mental illness and co-occurring disorders prior to criminal justice involvement	Data : Sheriff's Office Fort Bend Behavioral Health Services Emergency Management Services Texana Center Fort Bend County C.S.C.D. Fort Bend Regional Council on Substance Abuse
<p><i>Explanation:</i></p> <p>Fort Bend County EMS responded to 1,171 mental health crisis calls in 2011; this represents almost a 100% percent increase in the past 5 years (650 calls in 2005). In most cases, multiple entities respond to mental health emergency crisis which often result in transportation to an emergency room or the Fort Bend county jail. Many of these situations involve non-violent offenses that could be redirected to less restrictive clinically appropriate services if available. Mental health services in Fort Bend County continue to be lacking, especially for the non-insured population. As noted in the most recent Needs Assessment of Fort Bend County, conducted by the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs (Summer of 2011), the lack of services has resulted in "mental health becoming a law enforcement issue." Texana Center is the local mental health authority for Fort Bend County and the main provider of mental health services to the indigent. Texana served 5,058 adults and 1,984 youth in FY12 throughout a six county region. Of these 2,556 adults and 1,154 youth were Fort Bend County residents. This number greatly exceeds the local MHA target capacity but certainly does not meet all of the MH needs of the county, especially for the non insured population.</p> <p>Fort Bend County does not have a crisis stabilization unit for persons with mental illness or sufficient psychiatric beds to meet the need of children and adults with serious mental illness, many of which have no insurance. This is the same for persons with substance abuse disorders. Fort Bend County residents continue to have substandard access to substance abuse treatment. This county has no in-patient hospital or community based residential treatment facilities and only two funded brief-stay outpatient treatment providers to address a county that has grown 65% in the last decade. Many untreated persons, who suffer from co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders are arrested for misdemeanors and felonies. Because there is no psychiatric hospital in Fort Bend County for crisis stabilization services, both juveniles and adults have to be sent to Harris County or other facilities outside Fort Bend County. Upon discharge, they are given instructions to continue with the same doctor for follow-up outpatient treatment, which for most poses a real logistical problem due to the geographic location of the facility.</p> <p>The Fort Bend County jail and the probation systems are presently the primary behavioral health service provider for this population. In 2011, approximately 20% of the jail population was prescribed psychotropic medication and a majority of these individuals report previous interaction with a MH system. There is also a rapidly emerging need for trauma informed specialty behavioral</p>	

health services for veterans and female offenders. Many of these offenders are victims of domestic violence, victimization, or war related trauma. These populations require specialized trauma related services. Unfortunately, the families of persons with untreated mental illnesses are often the victims of the offense leading to the individual's criminal justice involvement, necessitating community intervention to support families as well as victims.

Potential Response to the Problem:

In October of 2010, Fort Bend County Behavioral Health Services was established to work alongside the courts, criminal justice departments (adult and juvenile), emergency medical services, and health and human services to improve the coordination of systems for persons with mental illness and addictions that come into contact with Fort Bend County courts.

Representatives from the Fort Bend Community Supervision and Corrections Department, (CSCD), Fort Bend Judiciary, Fort Bend District Attorney's Office, Criminal Defense attorneys, Texana Center, Fort Bend Sheriff's Office, Fort Bend County Jail, Oak Bend Medical Center, Fort Bend Regional Council on Substance Abuse, County Indigent Health Care, County Health and Human Services, Fort Bend Mental Health America, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Emergency Management Services, Public Defenders office and Fort Bend Commissioners Court have come together to form the Fort Bend Criminal Justice Mental Health Initiative, coordinated by the Fort Bend County Department of Behavioral Health Services. The CJMH has met regularly and developed and implemented processes that address the needs person with mental illness involved in the criminal systems. As a result of this community collaborative, Fort Bend County has also developed specialty MH courts, specialized dockets, processes for the early identification of mental illness when individuals are incarcerated, multidisciplinary team meetings in the jail and increased the collaboration and communication among Texana, the Sheriff's office, probation, medical and clinical staff and specialized public defender. By working together and enhancing jail based mental health services, specialized legal representation, and supervision service, FB county saw a significant reduction in the length of incarceration for person with mental illness (the average length of incarceration for 2011 was 37 days less than that of 2010). This is a significant outcome for FB county criminal justice system.

Fort Bend County also submitted a proposal through the 1115 waiver process to develop a crisis system that better identifies people with behavioral health needs, responds to those needs and links persons with their most appropriate level of care. Our goal is to keep individuals healthy and safe, develop processes and interventions to manage challenging behaviors, and avoid unnecessary use of the emergency room, hospitalization, or incarceration. First responders have become the default interveners for behavioral health crises in FBC, with limited options for these patients. Unfortunately, many persons with mental illness end up in the ER for several hours waiting for an evaluation or transported to the FBC Jail. The proposed FB behavioral health crisis response and Intervention project will enhance the safety net, provide necessary intervention and diversion services and as a result serve as the main gatekeeper to EMS transports, admissions to the emergency room, and incarcerations. The FBC project will include: (1) assessment and enhancement of 911 dispatch system to identify and respond to behavioral health crises, (2) development of a specialized crisis intervention team (CIT) within Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office, and (3) implementation of cross systems training and linkages to appropriate services and supports.

An additional 1115 project was also submitted to develop and evaluate a diversionary program for youth with mental illness and other complex behavioral health needs.

Although the 1115 projects, if funded, will be a significant enhancement to our crisis and intervention services, there continues to be a need for post-discharge services including housing, treatment and wraparound supports.

2. Lack of personnel to review, process and handle mental health cases (prosecutor for mental health caseload)

Data : Fort Bend District Attorney's Office

- Fort Bend Office Mental Health/Public Defender Department
- Fort Bend Behavioral Health Services

Explanation:

Persons with mental illness present many challenges to the criminal justice system and often remain incarcerated for longer periods of time for less violent offenses than persons without mental illness. This national trend has influenced the development of specialized MH dockets and courts, specialized defense attorneys and specialized prosecutors that work together as a team to expedite the processing of cases provide adequate representation and coordinate case management. In Fort Bend County, the 268th Judicial District and County Court at Law #1 handle the mental health caseload. Currently, the county has a Mental Health Public Defender's Office with 3 attorneys, 1 administrative assistant, three caseworkers and one social worker. The social service staff refers individuals for a variety of community based services and provides case management services. Each defendant with mental illness receives quality representation as well as help finding treatment options and other available social services in their community. The Public Defender's office handles the majority of the mental health cases, but other attorneys are also assigned to these types of cases. The office began in January of 2010, and since then they have closed more than 400 criminal cases and have lowered the amount of time clients spend in jail before their case is resolved. In addition to the MH Public Defender's office, there is also a wheel of defense attorneys who receive appointments to mentally ill defendants; and mentally ill defendants can hire their own attorney. The one "mental health" prosecutor handles all of the mental health probation cases in both district and county court, as well as the time sensitive civil commitments based on incompetency and civil commitments based on not guilty by reason of insanity. Cases are referred to the current Mental Health Prosecutor for review and determination of eligibility. Then, once accepted into the Mental Health court, the prosecutor must handle the case until disposition. In addition to the handling all the cases referred to and accepted into Mental Health Court, the prosecutor also sits in on trials involving mental health issues in other courts, participates in weekly jail treatment staffing and all staffings for the MH felony and Misdemeanor courts. In addition, the MH prosecutor is also handling all of the Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGRI) Cases returning from the state hospital and many of the cases that involve a co-occurring Intellectual Developmental Disability.

As of December of 2012, the mental health prosecutor was handling approximately 90 felony cases; approximately 100 misdemeanor cases; 5 long term commitments for competency restoration cases and 2 not guilty by reason of insanity (NGRI) commitments. During 2012, the mental health prosecutor reviewed a total of 165 misdemeanor for MH court (76 were accepted) and 147 felony cases (52 accepted) and an additional 39 cases were referred but disposed prior to final review for MH court.

Potential response to the problem:

The potential response is to secure funding for an additional prosecutor to handle this caseload. With an additional prosecutor, and the collaboration with the MH Public Defender's Office, the Sheriff's Office, CSCD, Fort Bend County Behavioral Health Services and Texana, the length of time spent in jail could be shorter and disposition of cases could be expedited. An additional prosecutor could help manage the case load and flow of cases into the MH courts and processing of cases pending competency evaluations and/or restored to competency.

3. Lack of re-integration services (housing, medication) and supports for mentally impaired persons released from jail

Data : Mental Health/Public Defender
Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office
Fort Bend County C.S.C.D.
Fort Bend County Behavioral Health
Fort Bend NAMI
MHA of Fort bend

Explanation:

Though Fort Bend County has initiated processes and systems to address the behavioral needs of the criminal justice population, these needs are vast and the county lacks the services necessary to prevent criminal justice system involvement and reduce recidivism. To effectively support successful reintegration into the community housing and case management are essential. Resources for this piece are lacking and progress toward providing housing resources is very slow. A safe and appropriate place to live continues to be the biggest need for our population. The public defender's office and Texana can provide continuity of care for many of the persons being released from jail and as a result assist in the coordination of services. However, Fort Bend County continues to lack the capacity to address the mental health needs of this population after they are discharged. Major gaps in our continuum of care, essential for successful reintegration are (1) transition and long term housing and (2) mental health services (medication management). Texana Center, the local mental health authority, currently has a waiting list for services and as noted earlier, responds to the needs of six counties and already over serving their state funded targets. The lack of housing, mental health services, supports, transportation are all risk factors associated with criminal justice involvement and recidivism.

Potential Response to the Problem:

Fort Bend County has implemented multiple measures including in custody screening, Mental Health/Public Defender representation, Mental Health Felony and Misdemeanor Courts, and

ongoing service coordination with local substance abuse and mental health providers and advocacy groups (NAMI and MHA) as well as enhanced jail based mental health services. Unfortunately many return to the environment and abusive practices that that led to their criminal involvement. The potential response to this problem is providing structured local transitional housing, as determined by the Judge's orders, where they will receive services from local agencies, including the substance abuse and local mental health center, vocational training, job counseling, nutrition and personal hygiene training. Another potential and cost effective response toward ending this cycle of recidivism is the development and implementation of a reintegration "bridge" program that issues the client a prescription for all medications upon his release from jail and involves the family, in a structured manner, to ascertain treatment requirement compliance. In addition, better coordination with Social Services and/or Indigent Health may allow for prescription payments during the critical 60 to 90 days after release from the jail. Funding is needed to provide transition medications and services for persons released from jail especially for those under supervision of the Mental Health/Public Defender office, for up to 90 days following discharge. Funding is also needed to implement evidence based parties such as "peer mentors" to assist with reintegration and ongoing recovery. Housing "first" program and other evidence based housing programs should also be developed to meet the critical needs of persons with behavioral health needs released from jail.

4. Limited community based behavioral health services

Data : Fort Bend Behavioral Health Services
Fort Bend CSCD
Public Defenders Office - MH
Texana Center
Fort Bend Regional Council
Fort Bend NAMI
MHA of Fort Bend

Explanation:

Many of the county residents supervised by the Fort Bend County CSCD experience substance abuse and mental health disorders. Fort Bend County offers only two (2) funded outpatient, brief-stay treatment providers to address a serious and growing chemical abuse problem. Texana, the local mental health authority, receives limited funding to serve the indigent and services are limited to the DSHS priority diagnosis. These over-burdened providers are challenged to meet the needs of the community. Due to lack of resources, many who would benefit from treatment are unable to access care or unaware of how to access care. Fort Bend County does not have a residential chemical dependency treatment facility. Those clients who are clinically appropriate for residential or who require hospitalization cannot locally attain this level of service. Funding constraints also limit the length of stay possible in outpatient environments. The length of stay recommended to minimize strong enduring outcomes is a minimum of 90 days, in the appropriate level of care. The need for treatment services in Fort Bend County is increasing as this county continues to grow. In 2012, the Fort Bend Regional Council on Substance Abuse, (one of the two county providers) met with 554 residents to assess them for the presence and severity of a substance use disorder. Of this group, 427 did meet the medical criteria for substance use disorders and were treated in accordance with their

personal circumstance. This is pertinent to the community because FBRC continues to receive budget cuts as all public and private funders structure their service authorizations and their giving to meet the challenges of the current economic climate. This is particularly unfortunate when the rates of DWI are rising, in 2010 Mother against Drunk Drivers issued a statement that identified Fort Bend County as the DWI capitol of the U.S. County criminal justice funding streams have also been streamlined or reduced. Clients who are assessed by this provider must be appropriate for outpatient treatment, requiring substance abuse severity that can be effectively addressed in a non medical environment and a relatively stable home environment to even marginally support treatment efforts. Clients who do not have adequate housing, require medical detoxification or a residential care structure are referred to Harris County providers.

Housing for persons with mental illness/ substance abuse continues to be a major gap in our system. Yet, we recognize that housing is essential to keeping people out of the criminal justice system.

Potential Response to the Problem:

In response to this issue, Fort Bend County has initiated several specialty courts that are showing great success. These intensive programs follow a model that creates a multi-disciplinary team that supervises the client (probation officer and judge) while addressing and treating his substance abuse/mental health disorder. This successful model brings together the criminal justice professionals, behavioral health providers and the client on a structured frequent basis to ascertain that all facets of supervision and treatment are managed. Two examples of these courts include the Fort Bend County Drug Court (2003), the first specialty court developed for the county and the current Mental Health Initiative (2009). The Fort Bend County Drug Court Program has served over 300 individuals in the “Closing Addictions Revolving Door” (C.A.R.D.) program. The CSCD Mental Health Initiative has served 599 individuals over the past three years (FY10, FY 11 and FY12). The model for these and Fort Bend County’s DWI Court, and Misdemeanor specialty court programs unites the community in a strong collaborative that supports the client in achieving independence from the behaviors that led him to his criminal justice involvement.

The mental health initiative has served a total of 350 individuals with mental impairments (in FY10 and FY11). Fort Bend County CSCD ensures the flow of information between Courts, jail, and treatment providers. This function has improved treatment coordination and case processing. CSCD has also contracted with a private residential facility to provide housing for mentally ill offenders discharged from jail. This program works closely with CSCD staff to provide appropriate supervision and treatment. This has been essential to discharge planning and successful community reintegration. Expansion of these programs to include a residential option and increased coordination of care would more effectively serve a greater number of people and would maximize the existing community systems. Specialty court models are evidence based solutions that provide sound behavioral health components within a criminal justice model. The Drug Court model is proven over 20 years of practice and is gaining frequency in replication. Its success has encouraged the implementation of other specialty courts such as those in Fort Bend County; this is an effective model and any funding provided to support its continuation, expansion or enhancement certainly benefits the community.

<p>5. Limited access to Behavioral Health Services for children at risk of involvement or involved in the juvenile justice system including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of inpatient psychiatric beds • Lack of crisis stabilization services • Limited access to behavioral health services including education and prevention • Increased need for trauma focused interventions • Limited prevention, intervention and counseling services for students experiencing behavioral health problems resulting in gang involvement and other anti-social behavior 	<p>Data :</p> <p>United States Department of Health and Human Services, et al (1999) Otto et al, 1992, Edens & Otto, 1997.</p> <p>Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department</p> <p>Fort Bend County Community Supervision and Corrections Department</p> <p>Fort Bend County Health & Human Services</p> <p>Fort Bend County Women’s Center</p> <p>“A Needs Assessment of Fort Bend County”, LBJ School of Public Affairs at University of Texas and The George Foundation (2006 and 2011)</p> <p>“Community profile – Fort Bend County Homeless and Marginally Housed”, Office of Community Projects, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Houston</p> <p>Datos treatment outcomes study, 1997</p> <p>FBISD “Pride Survey” 2009</p> <p>FBISD 2011 police data (gang involvement).</p> <p>LCISD Safe and Drug Free Schools Survey, 2007</p>
<p><i>Explanation</i></p> <p>The Fort Bend County juvenile justice system remains the primary local provider of mental health services to children. In the juvenile justice system the number of youth diagnosed with mental illness is significantly greater than that in the general population. It is estimated that up to 70% of the youth in the juvenile justice system have at least one mental health disorder and approximately 20% have a serious mental illness¹. There is agreement among both mental health and correction systems that many of these youth would be better served in community based programs with clinically appropriate interventions and supports.² Youth with mental illness end up on the doorstep of juvenile justice system through a variety of different paths and the juvenile justice system, much like the criminal justice system, has become the default mental health treatment for youth.</p>	

¹ 1. Joseph J. Cocozza and Kathleen R. Skowrya, “Youth with Mental Health Disorders: Issues and Emerging Responses,” *Juvenile Justice*, 7 (April 2000): 6; available at www.ncmhjj.com/pdfs/publications/Youth_with_Mental_Health_Disorders.pdf.

² National Health Policy Forum: Mental Health and Juvenile Justice: Moving Toward More effective Systems of Care ; available at http://www.nhpf.org/library/issue-briefs/IB805_JuvJustice_07-22-05.pdf

In Fort Bend County, the lack of comprehensive and coordinated services for youth with serious mental illness has resulted in the juvenile probation department (including the detention facility) becoming the assessment, stabilization and even treatment center for many of these youth. The most recent Needs Assessment of FBC conducted by the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs in the summer of 2011 states that the lack of services for the mentally ill has resulted in “mental health becoming a law enforcement issue.”³ The same study also indicated the scarcity of mental health services especially for the poor as a priority need for the county. Mental health services for youth, especially those with no insurance or on Medicaid, and with complex behavioral health needs is a significant need in Fort Bend County.

Over the past decade, Fort Bend County Probation Department has experienced a significant increase in the number of youth with mental health issues. Although the total number of juvenile cases has slightly decreased over the last several years, it is estimated that the number of cases involving mental health disorders, has nearly doubled. A study completed by the Fort Bend Juvenile Probation Department (FBJPD) found that 18% to 22% of the youth in juvenile detention (between 2005 and 2009) were on psychotropic medication. The most recent data obtained from FBJPD indicated that 40% to 45% of the youth in detention are on psychotropic medications. This increase is a direct result of a decrease in treatment services for youth at the community level, a decrease in inpatient treatment services, and the closing of several residential treatment centers in the Houston Metropolitan Area. Consequently, the juvenile justice system has become the default system for providing mental health services to youth. Unfortunately, this is often the start of a cycle with the criminal justice system leading into adulthood.

In addition to the county’s lack of mental health services for youth, the threat of Fort Bend County’s young people becoming involved with dangerous drugs is very real. Lamar Consolidated ISD and Fort Bend ISD regularly conduct surveys in their large districts. A compilation of the latest survey data indicates that a startling 7% of Fort Bend County high school senior report *daily* use of “any illicit drug”; twelve percent of 9th graders report weekly alcohol use and this percentage rises dramatically to 27% of 12th graders reporting weekly alcohol use. Nine percent of high school freshmen report weekly marijuana use, increasing to 13.5% by juniors. An alarming trend of Xanax abuse begins in the 6th grade at 2.2% and escalates to 12% by high school seniors.

Student perception of risk related to substance use varies based on the substance. For the 6th grade students surveyed, 91% considered “drugs” to be very harmful, 78% considered “tobacco” to be very harmful, while only 57% considered “alcohol” as very harmful. Further survey results show that 8% of elementary school students are experimenting with alcohol and 9% with inhalants. The survey also indicates that 27.2% of elementary school students reported being around other young people who use alcohol and drugs.

³ http://www.rgkcenter.org/sites/default/files/file/research/FB%20Report_for_posting.pdf

Fort Bend ISD is the seventh largest district in Texas and still growing. The demographic and environmental urbanization of the district has challenged the administration to provide services to address growing concerns about the disenfranchised teens who are more readily becoming gang involved in their district. Safety on school campuses and concerns about weapons, community outcry about gang graffiti and violence (bullying, intimidation, fighting between schools) challenge the counselors, teachers and staff to appropriately educate the students in environments of insecurity.

FBISD police have documented student and family involvement in MS13 and South West Cholos. This diverse district with has enrollment of 69,450, while Lamar Consolidated ISD (western Fort Bend County) has an enrollment of 25,500. Both districts are experiencing continued growth and increased social issues including juvenile justice overcrowding, untreated juvenile mental health and substance abuse problems. Gang involvement is reported as more established in the western part of the county but is increasingly prevalent in the eastern municipalities and the Fort Bend ISD school district. The community is working with the schools as much as possible to reduce the gang presence, through local law enforcement efforts, task forces, and prevention focused coalitions and peer alternative programs. These systems are overburdened.

Potential response to the problem: In response to this lack of services for self identified and documented gang members FBISD proposed the creation of at least 2 full time staff charged with the prevention, identification and reduction of gang related substance abuse problems and mental health issues. The district would receive referrals from administrative personnel at each campus as well as law enforcement. Outside agencies would be utilized for more intensive intervention for gang involved youth. Ultimately the district could develop a functional task force to adequately address the gang problem in eastern Fort Bend County.

The Fort Bend CJMH initiative has expanded to include Fort Bend Juvenile Probation department and address juveniles with mental illness and co-occurring disorders. We know that many children involved in the juvenile justice system are at high risk for adult criminal behavior. We also, know that successful interventions and prevention can make a difference. Many of the processes and services developed for adults can also benefit the youth in FB county. For example, additional training of law enforcement on how to respond to mental illness, development of crisis interventions teams, crisis stabilization services, intensive treatment services, wraparound services and aftercare are necessary services for both adults and children. Fort Bend County has also developed a “behavioral health juvenile diversionary” project as part of the 1115 waiver initiative. The proposed program would divert youth with complex behavioral health needs such as serious mental illness or a combination of mental illness and intellectual developmental disabilities, substance abuse and physical health issues from initial or further involvement with juvenile and to support them in their communities. Services are individualized and community based and include assessment, multi disciplinary treatment planning, crisis stabilization services, family supports, respite, specialized therapies (trauma focused interventions, cognitive behavioral interventions), medication management, case management and wraparound supports.

Fort Bend County is also the site of the Infant Toddler Court Initiative for abused/ maltreated infants and toddlers. This specialty court under the leadership of Judge Pope and Dr Almeida, focuses on early interventions for abuse and neglected birth to three year olds and their families. This court initiative recognizes the importance of early intervention, healing trauma and repairing the relationship between a child and their parent and improving the odds for the youngest and most vulnerable victims. In summary, this specialty court focuses on breaking the cycle of abuse and the cradle to prison pipeline.

6. Increased demand for mental health services including screening and assessment, mental health nursing services, treatment planning, continuity of care, substance abuse services and psychiatric services for person on probation and in jail.

Fort Bend Women's Center

Explanation:

Women who are abused often suffer injury to their head, neck, and face. The high potential for women who are abused to have mild to severe Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a growing concern, since the effects can cause irreversible psychological and physical harm. Women who are abused are more likely to have repeated injuries to the head. As injuries accumulate, likelihood of recovery dramatically decreases. In addition, sustaining another head trauma prior to the complete healing of the initial injury may be fatal.

In 2010 48% of Shelter clients had severe or very severe General Assessment of Functioning (GAF) score which allows them to be eligible to apply for disability. In 2011 the number of clients rose to 56%. Clients reporting in the TBI assessment show the 60% suffer from head trauma; 50% have suffered strangulation; 24% lost consciousness; 52% expressed problems after the trauma that included headaches, dizziness, anxiety, depression, difficulty performing job/school work, changes in behavior and changes in their day to day relationships. 23% reported being sick after the trauma.

A woman with TBI who enters the criminal justice system may face additional challenges. She may appear to be disorganized, aggressive, temperamental, or confused. If her behaviors are misunderstood or misdiagnosed as indicating a mental health disability, which often happens, she may have difficulty obtaining custody or being credited as a victim or reliable witness

Potential Response to Problem:

The Fort Bend County Women's Center is asking for increased mental health screening in regards to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) as it affects victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. For the last fifteen months, the Women's Center has screened 145 clients of suspected TBI. An increase in awareness of TBI among advocates and program staff will result in increased sensitivity, screening, referrals, accommodations, and ultimately, better outcomes, for women who are abused.

Domestic violence advocates and program staff should consistently screen women entering shelters and programs for TBI-related symptoms.

LITERACY IS AN OVER-REACHING ISSUE THAT AFFECTS EACH OF THE CATEGORIES DETAILED IN THE FORT BEND COUNTY COMMUNITY PLAN: JUVENILE SERVICES, VICTIM SERVICES, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND HEALTH/BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES

Literacy Issues: *(listed in order of importance)*

Identified Problem

- 1. Teach adults how to read; provide basic literacy skills to function in society.**

Data Collection:

ProLiteracy, National Center for Education Statistics; January 2009; 2007 Needs Assessment of Fort Bend County, 2009-2010 Fort Bend Community Plan, Texas LEARNS, 2005; National Institute for Literacy; The Economist, August 28, 2004; Wikipedia®; Census Bureau, 2007; 2000 U.S. Census; The Center for Immigration Studies; September, 2001; Qurratulain Akhtar; August 26, 2006; Center for Health Care Strategies; 2005 White House Conference on Aging; Literacy at Work; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Statistics, 2004; U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, April 2005; U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2004; U.S. Department of Education; 2003 Assessment of Adult Literacy; Literacy Council of Fort Bend County 2010-2011 statistics.

Potential Response to Problem:

Literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, compute and use technology at a level that enables an individual to reach his or her full potential as a parent, employee and community member. Functional illiteracy is a term used to describe reading and writing skills that are inadequate "to manage daily living and employment tasks that require reading skills beyond a basic level." Functional illiteracy is contrasted with illiteracy in the strict sense, meaning the inability to read or write simple sentences in any language.

Adult low literacy can be connected to almost every socio-economic issue that exists.

Literacy is an over-reaching issue that affects each of the categories detailed in the Fort Bend County Community Plan; juvenile services, victim services, law enforcement and health/behavioral health.

The mission of the Literacy Council of Fort Bend County is to end intergenerational cycles of illiteracy by improving adult literacy skills and generating community-wide literacy awareness.

The Literacy Council of Fort Bend serves between 1,500 and 2,000 students per year. The organization has been in Fort Bend County since 1987, serving the community for 25 years.

The Literacy Council of Fort Bend County is the only literacy provider in Fort Bend County accredited by ProLiteracy, the recognized accreditation provider.

Adults need strong literacy skills to raise children who have strong literacy skills.

An estimated 30 million people in the United States over the age of 16 read no better than the average elementary school child. There are 774 million adults around the world who are

illiterate in their native languages; two-thirds of them are women. ***Yet the ability to read and write is the basis for all other education.*** Literacy is necessary for an individual to understand information that is out of context, whether written or verbal. Without literacy skills, the abilities to read, to write, to do math, to solve problems, and to access and use technology, today's adults will struggle to take part in the world around them and fail to reach their full potential as parents, community members, and employees.⁴

Learning to read begins long before a child enters school. It begins when parents read to their children, buy their children books, and encourage their children to read. The research is clear: parents who are poor readers don't read as often to their children as do parents who are strong readers; children who are not read to enter school less prepared for learning to read than do other children.

- One in three adults in the US cannot read this sentence.⁵
- Texas has 6.5 million residents who speak a language other than English at home, almost double the national percentage, composing 38.6% of the Texas population.⁶
- English is never spoken in 31 million homes in the U.S.
- Some families have fewer than 4 books of any kind in their home.
- As the education level of adults improves, so does their children's success in school. Helping low-literate adults improve their basic skills has a direct and measurable impact on both the education and quality of life of their children.⁷
- 16 to 19 year old girls at the poverty level and below, with below average skills, are 6 times more likely to have out-of-wedlock children than their reading counterparts.⁸

By teaching adults, we reach the child.

Adults need strong literacy skills to be good employees.

Adults need strong literacy skills to be active in their communities.

Political campaigns often stress the need for "informed voters." However, an individual cannot be well informed if he or she cannot access written campaign literature, read newspapers or understand television coverage of the issues and candidates.

The 2003 Assessment of Adult Literacy, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, showed that low literate adults are less likely to vote than strong readers, *but become more active in their communities as their reading and writing skills improve.*⁹

- Better educated citizens pay more in taxes. In 2003, households headed by adults who never attended college equaled 47% of all U.S. households, yet generated just 25% of all

⁴ ProLiteracy

⁵ National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003

⁶ Texas LEARNS, 2005

⁷ National Institute for Literacy

⁸ Wikipedia®

⁹ US Department of Education; 2003 Assessment of Adult Literacy

federal individual income taxes. In contrast, individuals with bachelor's degrees made up 27% of all households and paid 51% of all federal income taxes.¹⁰

- Three out of four individuals who receive food stamps read on the two lowest levels of literacy.¹¹

Law Enforcement: Adults need strong literacy skills to avoid crime.

There is a clear correlation between adult illiteracy and crime.

- Correctional populations report lower educational attainment than do those in the general population. More than 45% of all inmates in local jails, 40% in state facilities, 27% in federal corrections institutions and 31% of those serving probation sentences did not graduate from high school or complete its equivalent while about 18% of the general population failed to attain high school graduation. Inmates age 24 and younger are less educated.¹²
- Two thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare.¹³
- 85% of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate.¹⁴
- Over 70% of inmates in America's prisons cannot read above a fourth grade level.¹⁵
- Dropouts costs Texas \$9.6 billion per year.¹⁶
- More than 60% of all state and federal corrections inmates can barely read and write.

Illiteracy and crime are closely related. The Department of Justice states, "The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence, and crime is welded to reading failure."¹⁷

Health / Behavioral Health: Adults need strong literacy skills to be healthy.

Health literacy includes the ability to understand instructions on prescription drug bottles, appointment slips, medical education brochures, doctor's directions and consent forms. It also involves the ability to negotiate complex health care systems. Individuals with low health literacy are unable to read a prescription bottle to administer medicine to their child or family member.

- Medication errors—many as the result of misread or misunderstood prescription labels—are the most common medical mistakes causing up to 7,000 deaths each year.¹⁸
- People with low functional health literacy are less likely to understand written and oral information given by physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and insurers.¹⁹
- Approximately half of Medicare/Medicaid recipients read below the fifth-grade level.²⁰

¹⁰ Southern Regional Education Board, 2005

¹¹ Wikipedia®

¹² Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report 4/15/03; Education and Corrections Populations

¹³ Wikipedia®

¹⁴ National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003

¹⁵ www.begintoread.com

¹⁶ United Way of Texas

¹⁷ www.begintoread.com

¹⁸ 2005 White House Conference on Aging

¹⁹ Center for Health Strategies (www.chcs.org)

²⁰ www.medicarerights.org

- The health care industry estimates \$73 billion per year of unnecessary health care expenses attributable to poor literacy.²¹
- When self-reported health status is taken into account, patients with low health literacy skills had fewer doctor visits but used substantially more hospital resources.²²
- Two thirds of U.S. adults age 60 and over have inadequate or marginal literacy skills, and 81% of patients age 60 and older at a public hospital could not read or understand basic materials such as prescription labels.²³

Health literacy is not simply the ability to read. In today's patient-centered healthcare environment, it requires complex reading, listening, analytical, and decision-making skills, and the ability to apply these skills to health situations. In a growing elderly population, health literacy becomes increasingly more important.

Identified Problem:

2. Teach adults how to read, write, and speak English- serve varied demographics in Fort Bend County area

Data Collection:

Literacy Council of Fort Bend 2010-2011 statistics; 2009-2010 Fort Bend County Community Plan

Potential Response to Problem:

Literacy Awareness: The following statistics and literacy information is presented to educate the general population regarding the increasing need for literacy services in Fort Bend County.

- A language other than English is spoken in 30.7% of Fort Bend County homes. This compares with 31.2% in Texas.²⁴
- In 2009, Fort Bend County was reported with a 24% rate of individuals lacking basic literacy skills. This compares to Texas at 19% and neighboring Harris County at 21%.²⁵ It also compares to surrounding counties, which report the following rates: Wharton: 20%; Waller: 20%; Brazoria: 13%; Galveston: 13% and Montgomery: 11%.
 - *This means that approximately **1 in 4** residents of Fort Bend County lack basic literacy skills. In **1998**, the rate was **1 in 5**. This is a trend that continues to worsen.*
- Today, Fort Bend County is already experiencing the ethnic diversity predicted for the U.S. in 2050. In 2005, our population was 11.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 19.8% Black, 21.1% Hispanic, 46.2% Anglo and 1.7% Other. Fort Bend County is one of the first minority/majority counties in the U.S. where no one ethnic group is more than 50% of the population.²⁶

²¹ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Statistics, 2004

²² National Network of Libraries of Medicine

²³ Williams, MV, *JAMA*, December 6, 1995

²⁴ 2000 U.S. Census

²⁵ National Center for Education Statistics; January 2009

²⁶ 2009-2010 Fort Bend County Community Plan

- Fort Bend County has been deemed a “New Ellis Island” by the Center for Immigration Studies. In Fort Bend County, the number of *legal* immigrants who arrived in just the 1990s is equal to 6 percent of the county’s entire population in 1990.²⁷

Fort Bend County is a county with 875 area miles. The Literacy Council of Fort Bend County has expanded to include an Outreach Program with approximately 24 partner sites which are strategically located in all major population areas in Fort Bend County: Sugar Land (main campus), Richmond, Rosenberg, Missouri City, Katy (Cinco Ranch), Fulshear, Stafford, Arcola and Needville. This is an effort to reach as many students seeking our services as possible *where they live*. Outreach partner sites help decrease over-crowding at the Sugar Land campus, decreases the cost of transportation for students and tutors and ultimately serves to increase class attendance for students.

The Literacy Council of Fort Bend County is fortunate to have approximately 200 active volunteer tutors who provide 3-6 hours of tutoring each week to adult literacy students at all locations. Tutors attend and complete a 12-hour tutor training in order to provide their volunteer service. Since 1987, volunteer tutors have returned almost \$17 million dollars of volunteer time to the Fort Bend County community.

Literacy Council of Fort Bend County demographics indicate:

- Our adult students are predominately women (75% vs. 25% male).
- Current total program ethnicity is: 49% Latino/Hispanic; 37% Asian American; 7% African American; 6% Caucasian; 1% Multi-racial/other.
- Current ages of adult students are: 18-24: 11%; 25-44: 56%; 45-59: 30%; 60+: 3%. Therefore, **97%** of current LCFBC adult students fall within “pre-retirement” age, and represent a population who could have a significant impact on the economic development of Fort Bend County.
- There is a waiting list for basic literacy, (ESL) English as a Second Language and GED classes at the Literacy Council of Fort Bend County.

To provide services county-wide, additional resources are needed which include continued tutor training, additional student materials and teaching equipment which is costly. With volunteers already in place, financial support provided to the Literacy Council ensures that the return on investment to Fort Bend County is significant.

When adults learn to speak, read and write English, the impact on themselves, their families and the community is long-lasting. Families are impacted as job prospects improve and students gain self-confidence. Schools are impacted as communication improves between parents and teachers and less classroom time is disrupted with language barrier issues. Employers have better prepared employees when they can speak, read and write in English.

²⁷ The Center for Immigration Studies; September, 2001

Identified Problem:

- 3. Further education; provide GED classes and Transitions to post-secondary education to better prepare adult students for workforce skills and further their education.**

Data Collection:

The 2005 US Census Bureau; LCFBC 2010-2011 statistics; Murdock, 2007.

Potential Response to Problem:

- The 2007 US Census Bureau reports that adults 18 and older earn as follows:
 - Master's, professional or doctoral degree: \$79,946
 - Bachelor's degree: \$54,689
 - High school diploma: \$29,448
 - **Less than a high school diploma: \$19,915²⁸**
- In many areas of Fort Bend County, the percentage of the population age 25 and older without a high school diploma is as high as 30%.²⁹
- There are 3.8 million adults in Texas without a high school diploma.³⁰
- Texas has slipped from 45th to last among states ranked by percent for citizens age 25 and older who have a high school diploma or GED.³¹

The Literacy Council began its GED program in 2005. In just 5 years, there has been a significant increase in registrations for this program. To meet the increasing demand, GED classes at the Literacy Council of Fort Bend County expanded from **3** in 2008-2009 to **11** in 2009-2010, then to **14** in 2010-2011. Each GED class has individual instruction provided by a class instructor.

The employees most in demand need to have at least a two-year college degree. A Literacy at Work study, published by the Northeast Institute in 2001, found that business losses attributed to basic skill deficiencies run into billions of dollars a year due to low productivity, errors, and accidents attributed to functional illiteracy.

- 3.3 million adult Texans are unable to fill out a job application.
- A rise of 1% in literacy scores leads to a 2.5% rise in labor productivity and a 1.5% rise in GDP per person.
- The effects of low literacy cost the U.S. \$225 billion or more each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment.
- 50% of the chronically unemployed are not functionally literate.
- Six of the ten fastest growing occupations listed by the U.S. Department of labor in its employment projections through 2012 require an associate's or bachelor's degree.

²⁸ US Census Bureau, 2007

²⁹ 2007 Needs Assessment of Fort Bend County

³⁰ Texas LEARNS, 2005

³¹ Murdock, 2007

Workers must be able to read safety regulations and warnings so they and their co-workers can stay safe on the job. Working in a team means that employees must also be able to communicate clearly with one another.

- Literacy enhances the skills of the workforce which result in a positive influence on work behavior. By enhancing skills, one can earn more which brings economic prosperity at both micro (individual) and macro (rise in real GDP) levels.

Literacy and economic development have endless companionship. Some of the benefits of literacy on economic development include the following:

- Literacy develops a sense of responsibility among the common man, by which one can become a good citizen.
- Literacy helps to enhance the communication skills among the people. Developed communication skills help an individual contact more employers in order to get better job opportunities. Developed communication skills also help to maintain pleasant relationships between the employer and employees, which reduces the conflicts among them and in this way, the productivity of the firm.
- Along with the development of professional and communication skills, literacy and education develop social skills by which an individual learns to move in the society.
- By enhancing the skills among the workers, the organization can get maximum productivity.

Literacy and economic prosperity are directly proportional and have a great influence on each other. As people are literate, they will work much better to satisfy their own needs; simultaneously, the economy will grow and develop. As the workforce is educated and skilled, an economy will prosper. Literacy does not automatically generate socio-economic development, but because literacy can enable individuals to have a wider range of choices in terms of education and skills-development, literacy can lead to greater knowledge and skills and can therefore permit individuals to enter into higher-paid forms of employment.

Literacy is the pillar on which the major part of an economy stands. If the pillar is strong enough to hold the economy, problems can be reduced and the economy will stand. If literacy is weak, the economy may be pushed downward or fall.

For continued economic development it is important to strengthen the pillar of literacy. It requires strategic planning and financial resources to facilitate literacy programs. The financial resources required for the development of literacy programs may not be considered an expense; in fact, it is an investment which gives fruitful results in the future.

By breaking the cycle of illiteracy, individuals can have a positive impact on themselves, their families, their community and the workforce.

There is currently a waiting list of GED students awaiting class availability.

In summary, Literacy is the foundation on which all other personal learning, growing and development takes place. By realizing a sense of urgency for providing basic skills to those in need in a quickly expanding diverse population, Fort Bend County will continue to be a premier place to live, work and raise a family.

Other Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need 1st)

Identified Problem

Data Collection

1. Lack of Public Transportation

Fort Bend County Public Transportation Department
Fort Bend County Health & Human Services
Fort Bend County Women's Center
Child Advocates of Fort Bend
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Potential Response to Problem:

Fort Bend County officially formed a Public Transportation Department in June 2005 to provide residents with safe and efficient public transportation services while maintaining service quality and customer satisfaction.

Demand Response

Fort Bend County currently offers shared ride bus services to the citizens of Fort Bend County. The Transportation service provides trips within Fort Bend County as well as Veterans Administration Hospital route, which includes a Social Security stop designated for Tuesday only.

Reservations are accepted between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday (excluding County holidays). Rides are scheduled for first drop-off by 8 a.m. and last pick up at 5 p.m. Services are offered Monday through Friday excluding County holidays. Trip fares are \$1.00 per person each way. This is a curb-to-curb service, however persons with disabilities can request door-to-door service.

Commuter Service

Fort Bend County also offers commuter services known as the TREKEXPRESS. Services are offered via two routes, serving the Greenway Plaza and Galleria areas of Houston. Services start in Sugar Land along the Highway 59 corridor with the first stop at the University of Houston-Sugar Land Park and Ride lot and another at the AMC Theater parking lot at First Colony Mall. The Greenway Plaza route offers connections at the Houston Metro system via a stop at Metro's West Belfort Park and Ride lot. Buses leave Sugar Land for Houston weekdays between 5:10 and 8:00 a.m. and return to Sugar Land from Houston between 3:15 and 6:40 p.m. Services are not offered on holidays. Discounted ticket books are also offered.

Even with the addition of the services listed above, Fort Bend County residents have very limited access to public transportation. Fort Bend County Children's Protective Services still consistently relies upon services provided in Harris County with an expectation that parents can access these services on their own accord. Many children and families dealing with abuse issues have great difficulty in finding means of reliable transportation.

Even local Fort Bend County services are often beyond the immediate access to children and families. These services include parenting classes, therapy, sexual assault exams, and drug and alcohol assessments and other court ordered requirements.

Lack of transportation is a hindrance for other individuals seeking services as well, including seniors, medical patients, Fort Bend County Women's Center clients and other low-income individuals.

*Identified Problem**Data Collection***2. Lack of available & affordable medical care**

U.S. Census Bureau's 2002 Current Population Survey, as reported by "FamiliesUSA in November 2003

TexCare Partnership

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Fort Bend Family Health Center

Potential Response to Problem:

The TexCare Partnership handles the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) providing health coverage to low-income children in Texas. However, as of 2001, approximately 973,000 low-income Texas children remained uninsured according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

The Census Bureau released data in October 2004 that reported that Texas has the highest rate of uninsured residents in the nation at 25.1%. As far as Fort Bend County is concerning, 22% of children (under age 18) have no insurance coverage and 23.4% of Fort Bend County adults (over 19 years of age) have no health insurance.

Fort Bend County does not have a traditional public health care delivery system or a public transportation system in most of the county that can assist individuals without transportation to get to medical visits. Fort Bend County Health & Human Services does not provide primary health care services.

The Fort Bend Family Health Center (FBFHC) provides primary health care services for the poor and near poor (family income below 200% of poverty) of Fort Bend County. They are the only provider of sliding fee scale health care services for people of all life cycles in the service area.

*Identified Problem**Data Collection***3. Limited affordable and available child care**

The WorkSource – Gulf Coast Workforce Board
William S. Smith Sr. Tri-County Child Development Council, Inc.

Potential Response to Problem:

Neighborhood Centers, Inc. has contracted with The WorkSource to provide childcare services. In a 13-county region including Fort Bend County, more than 20,500 children receive subsidized childcare each day. However, there are 8,500+_ more children on the waiting list.

The William S. Smith Sr. Tri-County Child Development Council, Inc. Head Start Programs serve the child development needs of pre-school children (birth to 5 years) and their low-income families. They have 12 centers in Fort Bend County: 4 locations in the Richmond/Rosenberg area; and, 8 locations on the east side of the county. They are currently serving a total of 834 children at these sites, with a waiting list of up to 600.

*Identified Problem**Data Collection***4. Limited Bilingual services**

U.S. Census – 2000
Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce
Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department

Potential Response to Problem:

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000 in Fort Bend County, Texas, 30.7% of the population speaks languages other than English in the home.

Today, Fort Bend County has the ethnic diversity predicted for the U.S. in 2050. In 2005, our population is 11.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 19.8% Black, 21.1% Hispanic, 46.2% Anglo, and 1.7% Other. Fort Bend County is one of the first minority/majority counties in the United States, where no one ethnic group is more than 50% of the population.

An example of limited bilingual services is the Psychology Department at the Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department. One of the two staff psychologists is bilingual, however 80% of this professional's time is spent in crisis intervention and evaluation. Therefore, this individual can only have a caseload of 3-5 families. Additionally, there are very few bilingual therapists associated with the law enforcement agencies throughout Fort Bend County.

With a growing number of Asian residents comes the growing need for services to be provided in the Asian dialects. The ever-increasing Hispanic population also creates a greater demand for services to be provided in Spanish.

From court interpreters to law enforcement interpreters who work directly in the field to counselors, every field is finding an increase in demand for bilingual services.

Resources Available

Included below are resources identified by the Fort Bend County Community Planning Team that are available to provide services that could potentially help in closing criminal justice gaps:

Juvenile Justice:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
County Courts at Law Courts (4 courts)	Governmental	Administers justice for major criminal cases, major civil action, juvenile dispositions and detention, probate and mental health cases.
Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office	Governmental	Represents the people of the State of Texas in all felony and misdemeanor criminal cases, represents the State in juvenile matters, asset forfeiture cases, Department of Human Services matters, and Victim Assistance Coordinator.
Fort Bend County Juvenile Probation Department	Governmental	Handles juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17 referred by law enforcement agencies, schools and parents for delinquent conduct and conduct indicating a need for supervision. The department's mission is to rehabilitate delinquent children.
Fort Bend Partnership for Youth, Inc.	Nonprofit	Mission is to reduce youth involvement with the juvenile justice system through the support of mentoring and educational programs. Supports a variety of programs for youth and families involved with the juvenile probation department.
Youth for Christ	Faith based	Provides spiritual counseling and religious services for youth in the juvenile detention center.
Galveston-Houston Diocese Special Youth Services	Faith based	Provides spiritual counseling and religious services to youth involved with the juvenile probation department, e.g., detained youth
Parks Youth Ranch	Non-profit	Providing shelter, counseling and life changing services to at-risk and homeless youth in Fort Bend County.

Law Enforcement:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Community Supervision and Corrections Department	Governmental	Arm of the County Courts of Law and District Courts of Fort Bend County. Supervises felony and misdemeanor adult offenders in the community and provides tools for rehabilitation.
Fort Bend Sheriff's Office	Law Enforcement	To protect the lives, property and rights of all people in Fort Bend County.
Justice of the Peace Courts (5 in Fort Bend County)	Governmental	Must act in a neutral capacity to serve all citizens, law enforcement agencies, merchants, school districts and various other county and state regulatory agencies that file either civil or criminal actions. As coroner, the JP must accurately and with efficiency and consideration to all parties, determine cause of death and decide what outside agencies to employ to assist in this responsibility.
Law enforcement: cities, county and schools	Law enforcement	To protect the lives, property and rights of all people in the various jurisdictions and students in the school district.

Victim Services:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Child Advocates of Fort Bend 1) Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) 2) Children's Advocacy Center (CAC)	Nonprofit	1) CASA: To provide a voice to speak on behalf of abused and neglected children who are involved in the legal system through trained court appointed volunteers. 2) CAC: To lessen the emotional trauma to child victims by coordinating the investigation, assessment, prosecution and treatment of sexual and serious physical abuse.
Fort Bend County Women's Center	Nonprofit	Provides temporary housing and other wrap-around services to women (and their children, if any) who have been victimized. Crisis intervention counseling. Rape crisis program.

Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services	Governmental	Child protective services; child abuse prevention; assessment of suspected abuse/neglect; services to families involved in abuse/neglect cases.
Parks Youth Ranch	Nonprofit	Providing shelter, counseling and life changing services to at-risk and homeless youth in Fort Bend County.

Health / Medical / Substance Abuse:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Community Resource Coordination Group (CRCG) for Children & Youth	Governmental, school districts, and nonprofits	This group is comprised of representatives of various community agencies such as Texana MHMRA, the school districts, the juvenile probation department and some nonprofits. They staff specific cases in order to come up with resources and a plan for the child including residential placement.
Fort Bend County Health & Human Services	Governmental	Clinical Health Services: Immunizations; Screening (blood pressure, glucose, HIV): Disease treatment (Tuberculosis, sexually-transmitted diseases) Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Social Services Veteran's Services Animal Control Environmental Health Public Health Preparedness
Fort Bend Family Health Center	Nonprofit	Screening for citizen eligibility. Prenatal care, delivery services, family planning, pediatrics, WIC, adult care, psychotherapy and social services.
Fort Bend Regional Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse	Nonprofit	Education, assessment, counseling, youth & adult services, certified offender programs (DWI, MIP, Drug Offender and Tobacco)
Mental Health Association of Fort Bend County	Nonprofit	Education; information; community resource directory; annual screenings for alcohol abuse, anxiety, depression, eating disorders.
Planned Parenthood of Fort Bend, Inc.	Nonprofit	Outpatient medical care; counseling, referral and community programs on reproductive health and sexuality.
Pregnancy Resource Center of Fort Bend County	Nonprofit	Crisis pregnancy center; free pregnancy tests with information regarding fetal development and alternatives to abortion; information and referrals.
Texana Mental Health Mental	Governmental	To ensure the provision of a

Retardation Authority (MHMRA)

comprehensive array of quality, cost effective services focused on consumer choice and satisfaction for people with mental retardation, development delays and mental illness.

Prevention / Intervention:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
American Red Cross	Nonprofit	Assist people with recovery from disaster, assist servicemen and their families, transportation services to medical and social service appointments.
Boy Scouts	Nonprofit	Scouting programs for boys 6 or 7 years to 21 years of age.
Boys & Girls Club of Fort Bend County	Nonprofit	Recreational facilities and programs for high-risk boys and girls in the East End of Fort Bend County.
East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry, Inc.	Nonprofit	Full service food pantry and rent, mortgage, utilities assistance. (By appointment only.)
Escape Family Resource Center	Nonprofit	Parenting programs for families.
Family Outreach East Fort Bend	Nonprofit	Volunteers trained to prevent child abuse; parenting classes.
Family Service Center	Nonprofit	Preventive, supportive and therapeutic services for individuals, families and communities.
Fort Bend Dispute Resolution Center		Mediation training, peer mediation in schools, and mediation services for family, business, church, neighbors.
Fort Bend Family YMCA	Nonprofit	Serving East Fort Bend County
Fort Bend Independent School District	School District	In addition to regular academics for kindergarten through 12 th grade, they have literacy services for adults and Extended Day programs at elementary schools.
Girl Scouts	Nonprofit	Scouting programs for girls ages 5 to 17.
Gulf Coast Careers		Job listings, job market information, career counseling, job search resources, skills training, employer services.
Lamar Consolidated Independent School District	School District	Provides education for grades kindergarten through 12.

Interagency Cooperation

The following is a description of how the various resources listed in the previous pages could cooperatively work together to accomplish the goal of closing identified gaps in services:

By using the Community Plan structure, a series of meetings could be held throughout the year following the submission of the Plan. The topic and invitation list of each of these meetings would be very specific, focusing on one of the priority issues and those agencies that have linkage to that issue. Discussion could be developed on how the participating agencies could work together to try to eliminate some of the identified gaps in service.

Long-Range Plan Development, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Fort Bend County Community Planning Team works in conjunction with other planning groups in the county to ensure a regular exchange of ideas. Individuals active in the planning process generally serve on many of these committees and share mutual concerns.

The Fort Bend County Community Planning Team strives to meet periodically to review the plan and make necessary additions and deletions. At least one formal meeting of the entire group is held each fall, but agency and community representatives typically submit suggestions and changes via telephone and e-mail throughout the year to the Community Planning Coordinator.

Drafts and annual updates of the Community Plan are circulated by e-mail with requests for comments, changes, etc. Wherever possible e-mail is used to reduce the need for meetings, printing, postage, etc.

It is the intent of the Community Planning Group to improve outcomes for Fort Bend County families struggling with problems described in the plan's focus areas. Efforts are being made by many Fort Bend County agencies and organizations to address problems with local funds as well as grant funds from multiple state and federal sources. To the extent that these funds are available, the Community Planning Team will continue to encourage agencies to provide programming that addresses the outlined focus areas.

Contact Information

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This Plan is available on-line at the following URL address:

<http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/index.aspx?page=3>